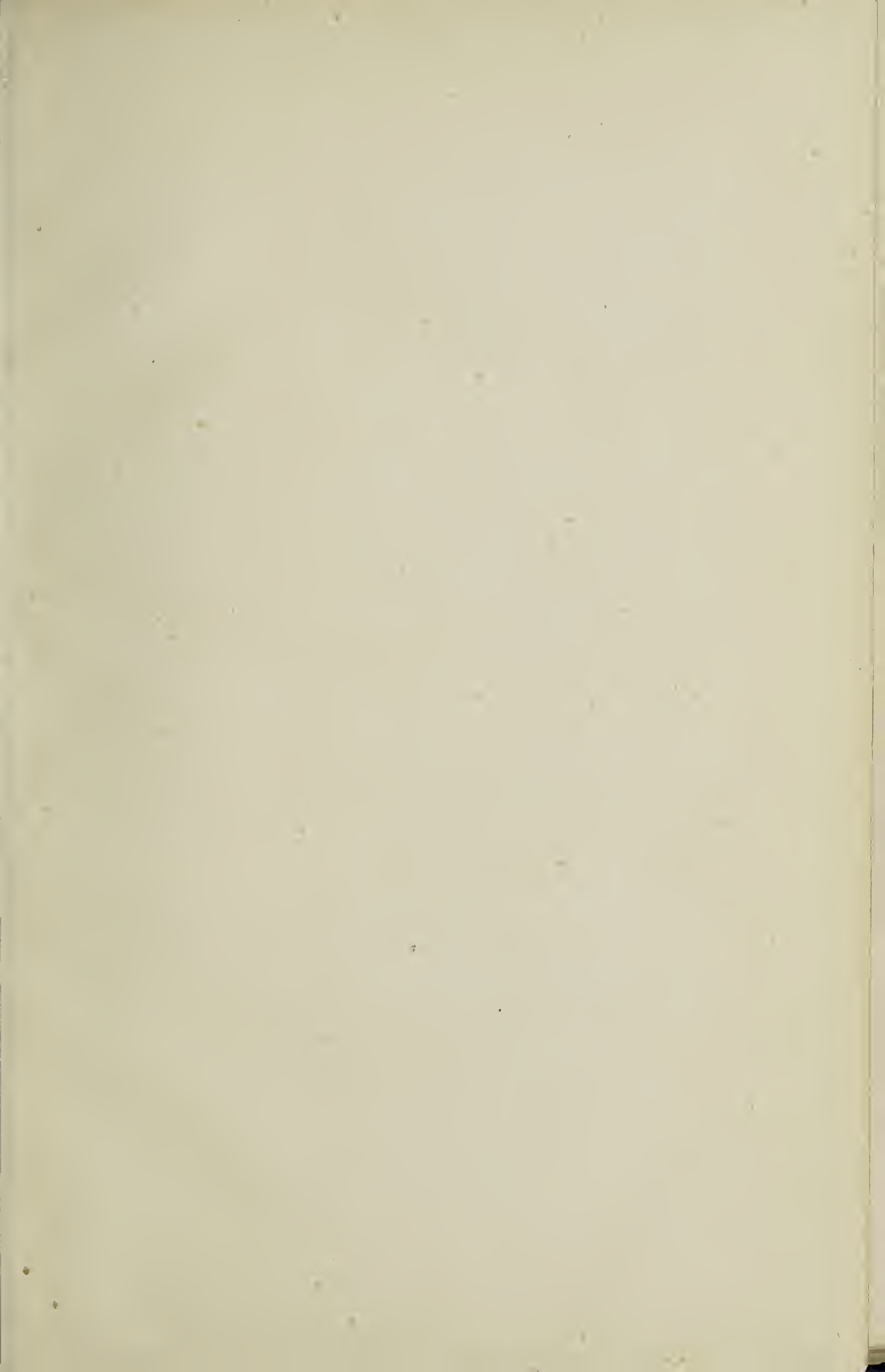
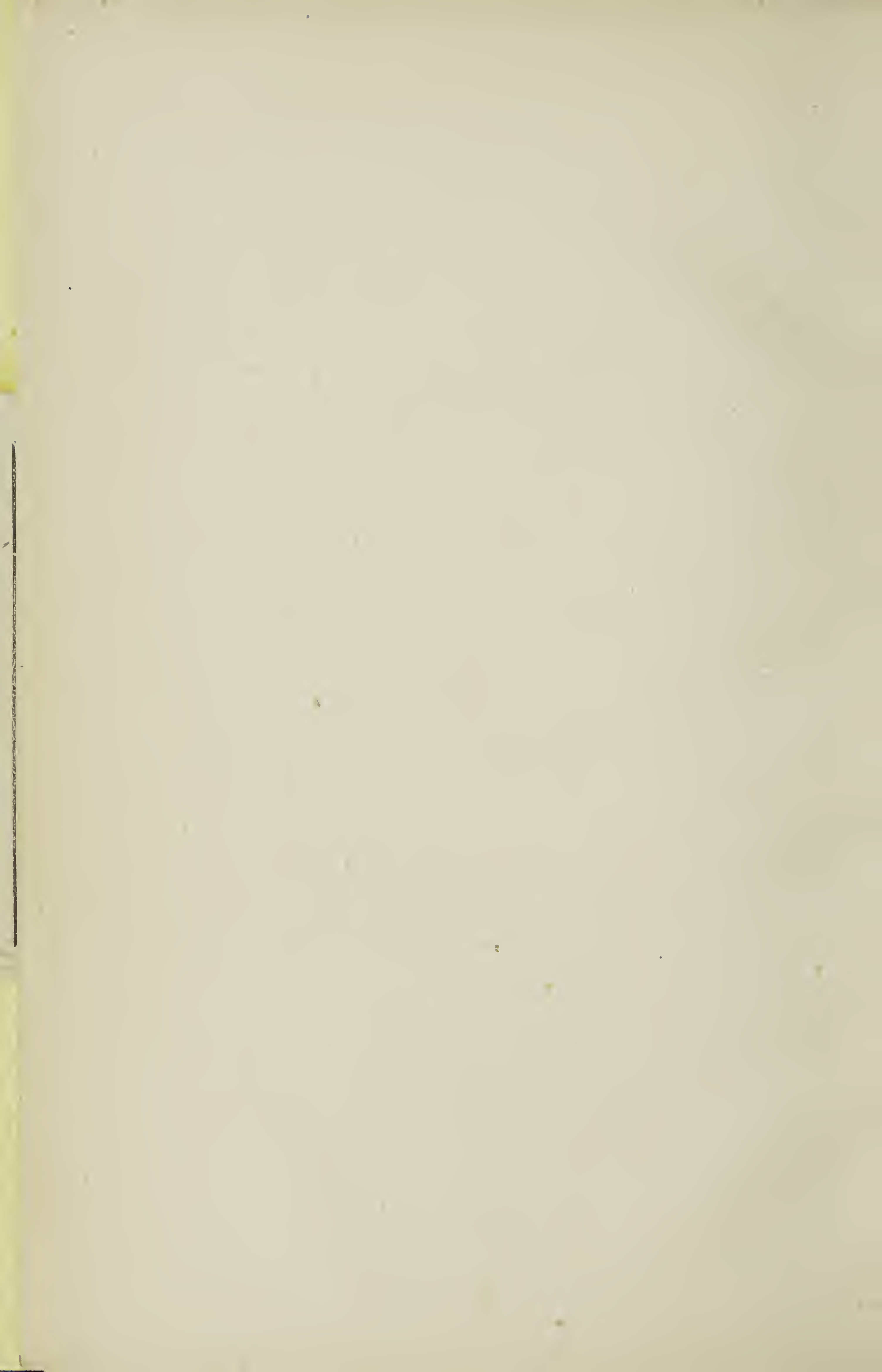
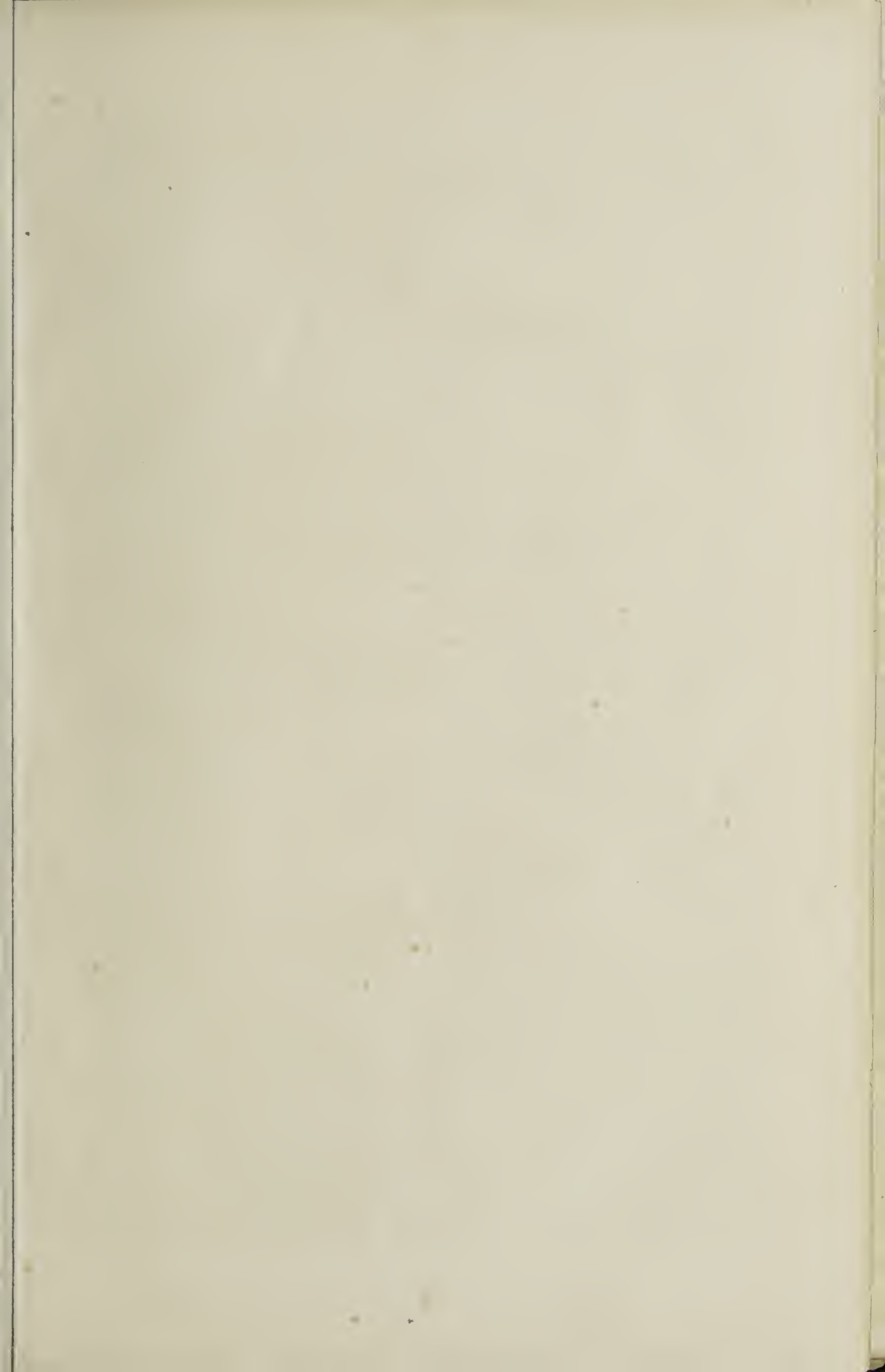




PORTER.









BOSRAH.



THE

GIANT CITIES OF BASHAN;

AND

SYRIA'S HOLY PLACES.

By the

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Author of "Five Years in Damascus," "Murray's Hand-Book for Syria and Palestine," "The Pentateuch and the Gospels," &c.



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1873.



TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

Lord Dufferin and Claneboye, K.P.,

&c. &c.

MY LORD—I dedicate this little volume to you in grateful acknowledgement of that personal friendship with which you have honoured me, and as a humble testimony, from one who feels a deep interest in Syria's welfare, to those noble exertions which your Lordship made to heal the divisions and promote the prosperity of that unhappy land. I have good reason to know that the wise counsels you gave and the enlightened policy you advocated, while British Commissioner in Syria, secured the esteem and confidence of all parties; and I feel assured that, had the policy which you inaugurated with such success in the Lebanon been extended in the manner you proposed to the whole of Syria, the dawn of a bright future would ere this have begun to illumine its blood-stained plains and mountains.

I have not said much in these pages of that war between

rival sects which recently desolated some of the fairest provinces of Lebanon, nor of those massacres which must leave the brand of everlasting infamy alike on those who planned, fostered, and perpetrated them. I should perhaps have said more had I not expected that they would have found an abler historian in "our mutual friend" Mr. Cyril Graham. In the absence of fuller details, I am happy to be able to insert in an Appendix one or two deeply interesting papers from the Rev. Smylie Robson, who, as you know, passed through the fearful three days' carnage in Damascus.

I confess that I feel considerable hesitation in placing these sketches of Bible lands and Bible story before one in every way so competent as your Lordship to detect their many imperfections. You will perceive that they are fragmentary. I do not attempt a description of all Palestine, or of all Syria. I omit many of the most noted places, and some of the most celebrated shrines. I do so, not because I think their mines of interest and instruction have been exhausted; far from it—I believe there is still much, very much, to be done for the illustration of the history and language of the Bible by the thoughtful and observant traveller. Bible stories are grafted upon local scenes; and, as is always the case in real history, these scenes have moulded and regulated, to a greater or less extent, the course of events; consequently, the more full and graphic the descriptions of the scenes, the more vivid and life-like will the stories become. The imagery of Scripture, too, is eminently Eastern: it is a reflection of the country. The parables, metaphors, and illustrations of the sacred writers were borrowed from the

objects that met their eyes, and with which the first readers were familiar. Until we become equally familiar with those objects, much of the force and beauty of God's Word must be lost. The topography of Palestine can never be detailed with too great minuteness; its scenery and natural products can never be studied with too much care. Bible metaphors and parables take the vividness of their own sunny clime when viewed among the hills of Palestine; and Bible history appears as if acted anew when read upon its old stage.

I have not avoided those more familiar localities, then, because previous writers have exhausted them, but simply because I have been anxious to lead my readers to other and less familiar scenes. I had opportunities, during my long residence in the East, of visiting regions seldom—some of them never before—trodden by European travellers. As I could not undertake a survey of all the Bible lands over which I wandered, I have thought it best to confine myself in this volume to those which appear to furnish information in some measure fresh and new. I have passed by Bethlehem and Nazareth, Hebron and Jericho, Tiberias and Shechem, that I might linger in Philistia and Sharon, Lebanon and Palmyra, Hamath and Bashan.

You will also observe, my Lord, that the book is not a simple diary of travel; nor is it a disquisition upon history or geography. I have in most cases attempted to group together in a popular way the incidents and results of two, three, and occasionally many visits to the same region, filling in the events of sacred history, and showing the customs of primitive life, as illustrated by what passed

before me. My aim has been to give, as far as possible, a complete picture, and to enable my readers to see the distant past more clearly through the medium of the present.

During all my journeys the BIBLE was my constant companion. I read its prophecies, as well as its history, amid the scenes to which they refer. I could not shut my eyes to the graphic details of the Record, nor to the ruin and desolations of the land; and I could not resist the conclusions which a careful comparison forced upon me. I do not wish, my Lord, to make you in any way responsible for these conclusions, or for the views I have ventured to express. Free thought and free inquiry, conducted honestly, and in the case of the Bible reverentially, is the right of every man. This, while fully granting it to others, I claim for myself. I have in all cases attempted to exhibit two pictures,—one of the country, as seen by myself; another as sketched by the Hebrew prophets. My readers, if not satisfied with my conclusions, can draw their own.

One thing, however, all Eastern travellers must admit—the perfect harmony between the Bible and the land in which it was written. I have heard your Lordship bear noble and eloquent testimony to the fact. Even M. Renan, with all his prejudices, saw it, and has expressed it in language of equal truth and beauty: "Toute cette histoire qui, à distance, semble flotter dans les nuages d'un monde sans réalité, prit ainsi un corps, une solidité qui m'étonnèrent. L'accord frappant des textes et des lieux, la merveilleuse harmonie de l'idéal évangélique avec le paysage qui lui servit de cadre furent

pour moi comme une révélation." These are remarkable words, which the Biblical student must fully appreciate.

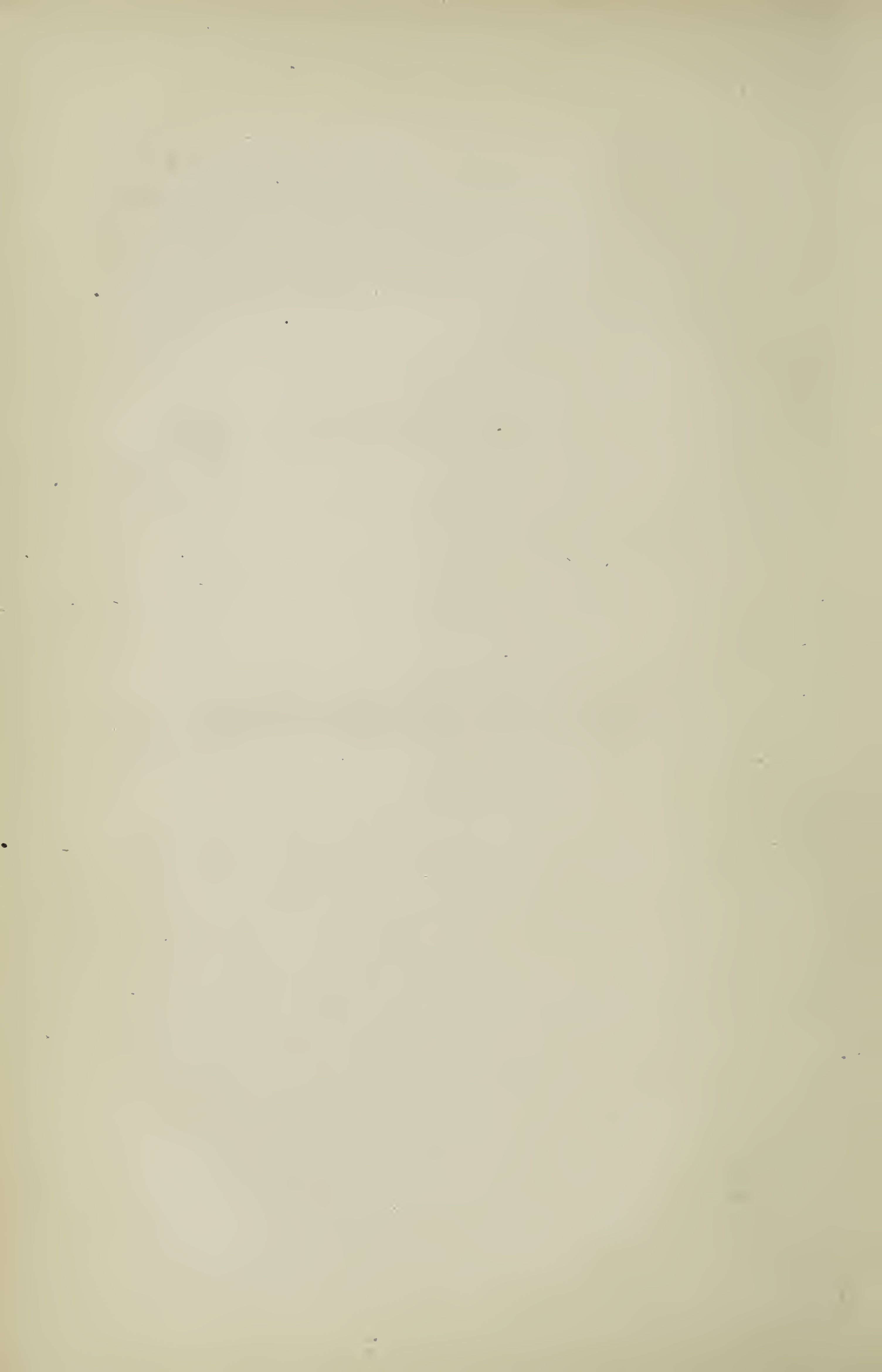
Permit me, in conclusion, to thank your Lordship for this opportunity of paying my hearty, though humble tribute to your high talents and distinguished services, and to subscribe myself,

My Lord,

Yours faithfully and respectfully,

J. L. PORTER.

Brandon Towers, Belfast.
January 1885.





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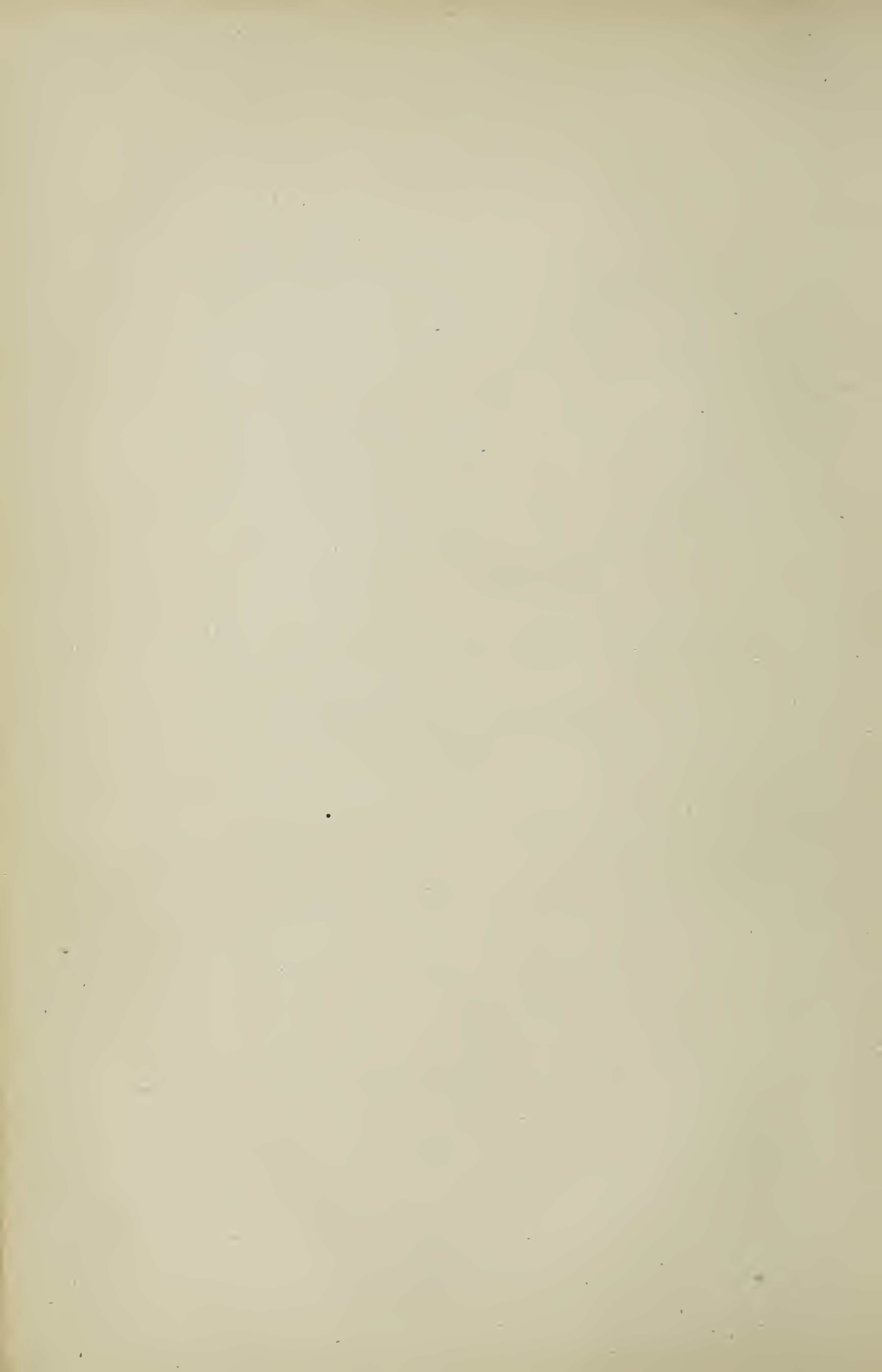
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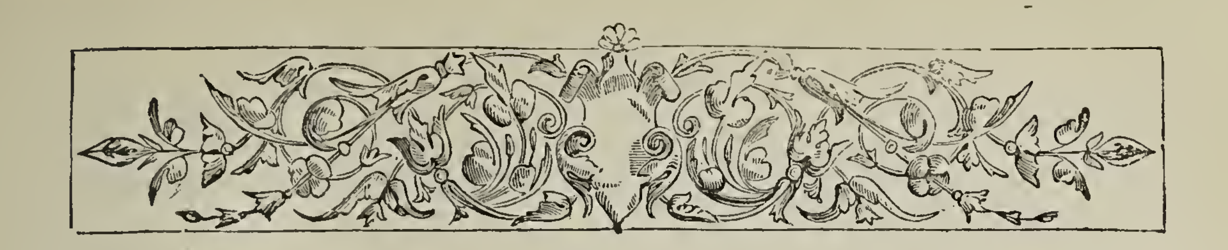




BASHAN AND ITS GIANT CITIES.







Bashan and its Giant Cities.

I.

"All Bashan, unto Salchah and Edrei, cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan. *For only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnant of the giants;* behold, his bedstead was a bedstead of iron; is it not in Rabbath of the children of Ammon? nine cubits the length thereof, and four cubits the breadth of it, after the cubit of a man. . . . . And the rest of Gilead, and all Bashan, the kingdom of Og, gave I unto the half tribe of Manasseh; all the region of Argob, *with all Bashan, which was called the land of giants.*"—Deut. iii. 10–13.

HISTORICAL NOTICES.

BASHAN is the land of sacred romance. From the remotest historic period down to our own day there has ever been something of mystery and of strange wild interest connected with that old kingdom. In the memorable raid of the Arab chiefs of Mesopotamia into Eastern and Central Palestine, we read that the "Rephaim in Ashteroth-Karnaim" bore the first brunt of the onset. The *Rephaim*,—that is, "the giants," for such is the meaning of the name,—men of stature, beside whom the Jewish spies said long afterwards that they were as grasshoppers (Num. xiii. 33). These were the aboriginal inhabitants of Bashan, and probably of the greater part of Canaan. Most of them died out, or were exterminated at a very early period; but a few remarkable specimens of the race—such as Goliath, and Sippai, and Lahmi (1 Chron

xx.)—were the terror of the Israelites, and the champions of their foes, as late as the time of David;—and, strange to say, traditionary memorials of these primeval giants exist even now in almost every section of Palestine, in the form of graves of enormous dimensions,—as the grave of Abel, near Damascus, *thirty* feet long; that of Seth, in Anti-Lebanon, about the same size; and that of Noah, in Lebanon, which measures no less than *seventy yards!* The capital and stronghold of the Rephaim in Bashan was Ashteroth-Karnaim; so called from the goddess there worshipped,—the mysterious "two-horned Astarte." We shall presently see, if my readers will accompany me in my proposed tour, that the cities built and occupied some forty centuries ago by these old giants exist even yet. I have traversed their streets; I have opened the doors of their houses; I have slept peacefully in their long-deserted halls. We shall see, too, that among the massive ruins of these wonderful cities lie sculptured images of Astarte, with the crescent moon, which gave her the name *Carnaim*, upon her brow. Of one of these mutilated statues I took a sketch in the city of Kenath; and in the same place I bought from a shepherd an old coin with the full figure of the goddess stamped upon it.

Four hundred years after the incursion of Chedorlaomer and his allies, another and a far more formidable enemy, emerging from the southern deserts, suddenly appeared on the borders of Bashan. Sihon, the warlike king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon, had tried in vain to bar their progress. The rich plains, and wooded hills, and noble pasture-lands of Bashan offered a tempting prospect to the shepherd tribes of Israel. They came not on a sudden raid, like the Nomadic Arabs of the desert; they aimed at a complete conquest, and a permanent settlement. The aboriginal Rephaim were now all but extinct: "Only Og, king of Bashan, remained of the remnant of the giants." The last of his race in this region, he was still the ruler of his country: and the whole Amorite inhabitants, from

Hermon to the Jabbok, and from the Jordan to the desert, acknowledged the supremacy of this giant warrior. Og resolved to defend his country. It was a splendid inheritance, and he would not resign it without a struggle. Collecting his forces, he marshalled them on the broad plain before Edrei. We have no details of the battle; but, doubtless, the Amorites and their leader fought bravely for country and for life. It was in vain; a stronger than human arm warred for Israel. Og's army was defeated, and he himself slain. It would seem that the Ammonites, like the Bedawîn of the present day, followed in the wake of the Israelitish army; and after the defeat and flight of the Amorites, pillaged their deserted capital, Edrei, and carried off as a trophy the iron bedstead of Og. "Is it not," says the Jewish historian, "in Rabbath of the children of Ammon? nine cubits the length thereof, and four cubits the breadth of it, after the cubit of a man" (Deut. iii. 11).

The conquest of Bashan, begun under the leadership of Moses in person, was completed by Jair, one of the most distinguished chiefs of the tribe of Manasseh. In narrating his achievements, the sacred historian brings out another remarkable fact connected with this kingdom of Bashan. In Argob, one of its little provinces, Jair took no less than *sixty great cities*, "fenced with high walls, gates, and bars; besides unwalled towns a great many" (Deut. iii. 4, 5, 14). Such a statement seems all but incredible. It would not stand the arithmetic of Bishop Colenso for a moment. Often, when reading the passage, I used to think that some strange statistical mystery hung over it; for how could a province measuring not more than thirty miles by twenty support such a number of fortified cities, especially when the greater part of it was a wilderness of rocks? But mysterious, incredible as this seemed, on the spot, with my own eyes, *I have seen* that it is literally true. The cities are there to this day. Some of them retain the ancient names recorded in the Bible. The boundaries of Argob are

as clearly defined by the hand of nature as those of our own island home. These ancient cities of Bashan contain probably the very oldest specimens of domestic architecture now existing in the world.

Though Bashan was conquered by the Israelites, and allotted to the half tribe of Manasseh, some of its native tribes were not exterminated. Leaving the fertile plains and rich pasture-lands to the conquerors, these took refuge in the rocky recesses of Argob, and amid the mountain fastnesses of Hermon. "The Geshurites and the Maacathites," Joshua tells us, "dwell among the Israelites until this day" (xiii. 13). The former made their home among the rocks of Argob. David, in some of his strange wanderings, met with, and married the daughter of Talmai, their chief; and she became the mother of Absalom. The wild acts of his life were doubtless, to some extent, the result of maternal training; they were at least characteristic of the stock from which she sprung. After murdering his brother Amnon, he fled to his uncle in Geshur, and found a safe asylum there amid its natural fastnesses, until his father's wrath was appeased. It is a remarkable fact,—and it shows how little change three thousand years have produced on this Eastern land,—that Bashan is still the refuge for all offenders. If a man can only reach it, no matter what may have been his crimes or his failings, he is safe; the officers of government dare not follow him, and the avenger of blood even turns away in despair. During a short tour in Bashan, I met more than a dozen refugees, who, like Absalom in Geshur, awaited in security some favourable turn of events.

Bashan was regarded by the poet-prophets of Israel as almost an earthly paradise. The strength and grandeur of its oaks (Ezek. xxvii. 6), the beauty of its mountain scenery (Ps. lxviii. 15), the unrivalled luxuriance of its pastures (Jer. l. 19), the fertility of its wide-spreading plains, and the excellence of its cattle (Ps. xxii. 12; Micah vii. 14),—all supplied the sacred penmen with lofty imagery.

Remnants of the oak forests still clothe the mountain-sides; the soil of the plains and the pastures on the downs are rich as of yore; and though the periodic raids of Arab tribes have greatly thinned the flocks and herds, as they have desolated the cities, yet such as remain,—the rams, and lambs, and goats, and bulls,—may be appropriately described in the words of Ezekiel, as "all of them fatlings of Bashan" (xxxix. 18).

Lying on an exposed frontier, bordering on the restless and powerful kingdom of Damascus, and in the route of the warlike monarchs of Nineveh and Babylon, Bashan often experienced the horrors of war, and the desolating tide of conquest often rolled past and over it. The traces of ancient warfare are yet visible, as we shall see, in its ruinous fortresses; and we shall also see that it is now as much exposed as ever to the ravages of enemies. It was the first province of Palestine that fell before the Assyrian invaders; and its inhabitants were the first who sat and wept as captives by the banks of the rivers of the East. Bashan appears to have lost its unity with its freedom. It had been united under Og, and it remained united in possession of the half tribe of Manasseh; but after the captivity its very name, as a geographical term, disappears from history. When the Israelites were taken captive, the scattered remnants of the ancient tribes came back, — some from the parched plains of the great desert, some from the rocky defiles of Argob, and some from the heights and glens of Hermon,—and they filled and occupied the whole country. Henceforth the name "Bashan" is never once mentioned by either sacred or classic writer; but the four provinces into which it was then rent are often referred to,—and these provinces were not themselves new. *Gaulanitis* is manifestly the territory of Golan, the ancient Hebrew city of refuge; *Auranitis* is only the Greek form of the Hauran of Ezekiel (xlviii. 16); *Batanea*, the name then given to the eastern mountain range, is but a corruption of Bashan; and *Tra-*

chonitis, embracing that singularly wild and rocky district on the north, is just a Greek translation of the old *Argob*, "the stony." This last province is the only one mentioned in the New Testament. It formed part of the tetrarchy of Philip, son of the great Herod (Luke iii. 1). But though Bashan is not mentioned by name, it was the scene of a few of the most interesting events of New Testament history. It was down the western slopes of Bashan's high table-land that the demons, expelled by Jesus from the poor man, chased the herd of swine into the Sea of Galilee. It was on the grassy slopes of Bashan's hills that the multitudes were twice miraculously fed by the merciful Saviour. And that "high mountain," to which He led Peter, and James, and John, and on whose summit they beheld the glories of the transfiguration, was that very Hermon which forms the boundary of Bashan. And the sacred history of this old kingdom does not end here. Paul travelled through it on his way to Damascus; and, after his conversion, Bashan, which then formed the principal part of the kingdom of Arabia, was the first field of his labours as an apostle of Jesus. "When it pleased God," he tells us, "who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; *immediately* I conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; *but I went into Arabia*" (Gal. i. 15–17). His mission to Arabia, or to Bashan, seems to have been eminently successful; and that Church, which may be called the first-fruits of his labours, made steady progress. In the fourth century nearly the whole inhabitants were Christian; heathen temples were converted into churches, and new churches were built in every town and village. At that period there were no fewer than *thirty-three* bishoprics in the single ecclesiastical province of Arabia. The Christians are now nearly all gone; but their churches, as we shall see, are there still, — two or three turned into

mosques, but the vast majority of them standing desolate in deserted cities. Noble structures some of them are, with marble colonnades and stately porticos, showing us alike the wealth and the taste of their founders, and now remaining almost perfect, as if awaiting the influx of a new Christian population. There was something to me inexpressibly mournful in passing from the silent street into the silent church; and especially in reading, as I often read, Greek inscriptions over the doors, telling how such an one, at such a date, had consecrated this building, formerly a temple of Jupiter, or Venus, or Astarte, as the case might be, to the worship of the Triune God, and had called it by the name of the blessed saint or martyr So-and-so. Now there are no worshippers in those churches; and the people who for twelve centuries have held supreme authority in the land, have been the constant and ruthless persecutors of Christians and Christianity. But their power is on the wane; their reign is well-nigh at an end; and the time is not far distant when Christian influence, and power, and industry, shall again repeople the deserted cities, and fill the vacant churches, and cultivate the desolated fields of Palestine.

The foregoing notices will show my readers that Bashan is, in many respects, among the most interesting of the provinces of Palestine. It is comparatively unknown, besides. Western Palestine is traversed every year; it forms a necessary part of the Grand Tour, and it has been described in scores of volumes. But the travellers who have hitherto succeeded in exploring Bashan scarcely amount to half-a-dozen; and the state of the country is so unsettled, and many of the people who inhabit it are so hostile to Europeans, and, in fact, to strangers in general, that there seems to be but little prospect of an increase of tourists in that region. This very isolation of Bashan added immensely to the charm and instructiveness of my visit. Both land and people remain thoroughly Oriental. Nowhere else is patriarchal life so fully or so strikingly exemplified. The

social state of the country and the habits of the people are just what they were in the days of Abraham or Job. The raids of the eastern tribes are as frequent and as devastating now as they were then. The flocks of a whole village are often swept away in a single incursion, and the fruits of a whole harvest carried off in a single night. The arms used are, with the exception of a few muskets, similar to those with which Chedorlaomer conquered the Rephaim. The implements of husbandry, too, are as rude and as simple as they were when Isaac cultivated the valley of Gerar. And the hospitality is everywhere as profuse and as genuine as that which Abraham exercised in his tents at Mamre. I could scarcely get over the feeling, as I rode across the plains of Bashan and climbed the wooded hills through the oak forests, and saw the primitive ploughs and yokes of oxen and goads, and heard the old Bible salutations given by every passer-by, and received the urgent invitations to rest and eat at every village and hamlet, and witnessed the killing of the kid or lamb, and the almost incredible despatch with which it is cooked and served to the guests,—I could scarcely get over the feeling, I say, that I had been somehow spirited away back thousands of years, and set down in the land of Nod, or by the patriarch's tents at Beersheba. Common life in Bashan I found to be a constant enacting of early Bible stories. Western Palestine has been in a great measure spoiled by travellers. In the towns frequented by tourists, and in their usual lines of route, I always found a miserable parody of Western manners, and not unfrequently of Western dress and language; but away in this old kingdom one meets with nothing in dress, language, or manners, save the stately and instructive simplicity of patriarchal times.

Another peculiarity of Bashan I cannot refrain from communicating to my readers. The ancient cities and even the villages of Western Palestine have been almost annihilated; with the exception of Jerusalem, Hebron, and two or three

others, not one stone has been left upon another. In some cases we can scarcely discover the exact spot where a noted city stood, so complete has been the desolation. Even in Jerusalem itself only a very few vestiges of the ancient buildings remain: the Tower of David, portions of the wall of the Temple area, and one or two other fragments,—just enough to form the subject of dispute among antiquaries. Zion *is* "ploughed like a field." I have seen the plough at work on it, and with the hand that writes these lines I have plucked ears of corn in the fields of Zion. I have pitched my tent on the site of ancient Tyre, and searched, but searched in vain, for a single trace of its ruins. Then, but not till then, did I realize the full force and truth of the prophetic denunciation upon it: "*Thou shalt be sought for, yet shalt thou never be found again*" (Ezek. xxvi. 21). The very ruins of Capernaum—that city which, in our Lord's day, was "exalted unto heaven"—have been so completely obliterated, that the question of its site never has been, and probably never will be, definitely settled. And these are not solitary cases: Jericho has disappeared; Bethel *is* "come to nought" (Amos v. 5); Samaria *is* "as an heap of the field, as plantings of a vineyard" (Micah i. 6). The state of Bashan is totally different: it is literally crowded with towns and large villages; and though the vast majority of them are deserted, *they are not ruined.* I have more than once entered a *deserted city* in the evening, taken possession of a comfortable house, and spent the night in peace. Many of the houses in the ancient cities of Bashan are perfect, as if only finished yesterday. The walls are sound, the roofs unbroken, the doors, and even the window-shutters in their places. Let not my readers think that I am transcribing a passage from the "Arabian Nights." I am relating sober facts; I am simply telling what I have seen, and what I purpose just now more fully to describe. "But how," you ask me, "can we account for the preservation of ordinary dwellings in a land of ruins? If one of our modern Eng-

lish cities were deserted for a millennium, there would scarcely be a fragment of a wall standing." The reply is easy enough. The houses of Bashan are not ordinary houses. Their walls are from five to eight feet thick, built of large squared blocks of basalt; the roofs are formed of slabs of the same material, hewn like planks, and reaching from wall to wall; the very doors and window-shutters are of stone, hung upon pivots projecting above and below. Some of these ancient cities have from two to five hundred houses still perfect, but not a man to dwell in them. On one occasion, from the battlements of the Castle of Salcah, I counted some thirty towns and villages, dotting the surface of the vast plain, many of them almost as perfect as when they were built, and yet for more than five centuries there has not been a single inhabitant in one of them. It may easily be imagined with what feelings I read on that day, and on that spot, the remarkable words of Moses: "The generation to come of your children that shall rise up after you, *and the stranger that shall come from a far land*, shall say when they see the plagues of this land, even all nations shall say, Wherefore hath the Lord done this unto this land? what meaneth the heat of this great anger?"

My readers are now prepared, I trust, to make a pleasant and profitable excursion to the giant cities of Bashan. I shall promise not to make too large a demand upon their time and patience, and yet to give them a tolerably clear and full view of one of the most interesting countries in the world.

THE CARAVAN.

On a bright and balmy morning in February, a party of seven cavaliers defiled from the East Gate of Damascus, rode for half-an-hour among the orchards that skirt the old city, and then, turning to the left, struck out, along a broad beaten path through the open fields, in a south-easterly direction. The leader was a wild-looking figure. His dress

was a red cotton tunic or shirt, fastened round the waist by a broad leathern girdle. Over it was a loose jacket of dressed sheepskin, the wool inside. His feet and legs were bare. On his head was a flame-coloured handkerchief, fastened above by a coronet of black camel's hair, which left the ends and long fringe to flow over his shoulders. He was mounted on an active, shaggy pony, with a pad for a saddle, and a hair halter for a bridle. Before him, across the back of his little steed, he carried a long rifle, his only weapon. Immediately behind him, on powerful Arab horses, were three men in Western costume: one of these was the writer. Next came an Arab, who acted as dragoman or rather courier; and two servants on stout hacks brought up the rear. On gaining the beaten track, our guide struck into a sharp canter. The great city was soon left far behind, and, on turning, we could see its tall white minarets shooting up from the sombre foliage, and thrown into bold relief by the dark back-ground of Anti-Lebanon. The plain spread out on each side, smooth as a lake, covered with the delicate green of the young grain. Here and there were long belts and large clumps of dusky olives, from the midst of which rose the gray towers of a mosque or the white dome of a saint's tomb. On the south the plain was shut in by a ridge of black, bare hills, appropriately named Jebel-el-Aswad, "the Black Mountains;" while away on the west, in the distance, Hermon rose in all its majesty, a pyramid of spotless snow. From whatever point one sees it, there are few landscapes in the world which, for richness and soft enchanting beauty, can be compared with the plain of Damascus.

After riding about seven miles, during which we passed straggling groups of men—some on foot, some on horses and donkeys, and some on camels, most of them dressed like our guide, and all hurrying on in the same direction as ourselves—we reached the eastern extremity of the Black Mountains, and found ourselves on the side of a narrow green

vale, through the centre of which flows the river Pharpar. A bridge here spans the stream; and beyond it, in the rich meadows, the *Haurân Caravan* was being marshalled. Up to this point the road is safe, and may be travelled almost at any time; but on crossing the Awaj, we enter the domains of the Bedawîn, whose law is the sword, and whose right is might. Our further progress was liable to be disputed at any moment. The attacks of the Bedawîn, when made, are sudden and impetuous; and resistance, to be effectual, must be prompt and decided. During the winter season, this eastern route is in general pretty secure, as the Arab tribes have their encampments far distant on the banks of the Euphrates, or in the interior of the desert; but the war between the Druses and the government, which had just been concluded, had drawn these daring marauders from their customary haunts, and they endured the rain and cold of the Syrian frontier in the hope of plunder. All seemed fully aware of this, and appeared to feel, here as elsewhere, that the hand of the Ishmaelite is against every man. Consequently, stragglers hurried up and fell into the ranks; bales and packages on mules and camels were re-arranged and more carefully adjusted; muskets and pistols were examined, and cartridges got into a state of readiness; armed men were placed in something like order along the sides of the file of animals; and a few horsemen were sent on in front, to scour the neighboring hills and the skirts of the great plain beyond, so as to prevent surprise. A number of Druses who here joined the caravan, and who were easily distinguished by their snow-white turbans, and bold, manly bearing, appeared to take the chief direction in these warlike preparations, though, as the caravan was mainly made up of Christians, one of themselves, called Mûsa, was the nominal leader. It was a strange and exciting scene, and one would have thought that any attempt to reduce such a refractory and heterogeneous multitude of men and animals to anything like order would be absolutely useless. Some of the camels and donkeys breaking loose,

scattered their loads over the plain, and spread confusion all round them; others growled, and kicked, and brayed; drivers shouted and gesticulated; men and boys ran through the crowd, asking for missing brothers or companions; horsemen galloped from group to group, entreating and threatening by turns. At length, however, the order was given to march. It passed along from front to rear, and the next moment every sound was hushed; the very beasts seemed to comprehend its meaning, for they fell quietly into their places, and the long files, now four and five abreast, began to move over the grassy plain with a stillness which was almost painful.

Leaving the fertile valley of the Pharpar, and crossing a low, bleak ridge, we entered one of the dreariest regions I had hitherto seen in Syria. A reach of rolling table-land extended for several miles on each side—shut in on the right by black hills, and on the left, by bare rugged banks. Not a house, nor a tree, nor a green shrub, nor a living creature, was within the range of vision. Loose black stones and boulders of basalt were strewn thickly over the whole surface, and here and there thrown into rude heaps; but whether by the hand of man, or by some freak of nature, seemed doubtful. For nearly two hours we wound our weary way through this wilderness; now listening to the stories of Mûsa, and now following him to the top of some hillock, in the hope of getting a peep at a more inviting landscape. At length we came to the brow of a short descent leading into a green meadow, with the traces of an old camp at one side round a little fountain, near which were some tombs with rude headstones. We were told that this is a favourite camping-ground of the Anezeh during the spring. Immediately beyond the meadow a plain opened before us, stretching on the east and west as far as the eye could see, and southward reaching to the base of the Haurân mountains. It is flat as a lake, covered with deep, rich, black soil, without rock or stone, and, even at this early sea-

son, giving promise of luxuriant pasturage. Some conical tells are seen at intervals, rising up from its smooth surface, like rocky islets in the ocean. This is the plain of Bashan, and though now desolate and forsaken, it showed us how rich were the resources of that old kingdom.

With increased speed—but still in the deepest silence—the caravan swept onward over this noble plain. We could scarcely distinguish any track, though Mûsa assured us we were on the Sultâny, or "king's highway." It seemed to us that his course was directed by a conical hill away on the southern horizon, rather than by any trace of a road on the plain itself. As we advanced, we began to notice a black line extending across the plain in the distance in front. Gradually it became more and more defined, and, ere daylight waned, it seemed like a Cyclopean wall built in some bygone age, and afterwards shattered by an earthquake. Riding up to Mûsa, I asked what it was. "That," said he, "is the *Lejah*." Lejah is the name now given to the ancient province of Trachonitis; and this bank of shattered rocks turned out to be its northern border. The Lejah, as we shall see hereafter, is a vast field of basalt, placed in the midst of the fertile plain of Bashan. Its surface has an elevation of some thirty feet above the plain, and its border is everywhere as clearly defined by the broken cliffs as any shore-line. In fact, it strongly reminded me of some parts of the coast of Jersey. And this remarkable feature has not been overlooked in the topography of the Bible. Lejah, my readers will remember, corresponds to the ancient Argob. Now, in every instance in which that province is mentioned by the sacred historians, there is one descriptive word attached to it—*chebel;* which our translators have unfortunately rendered in one passage "region," and in another, "country" (Deut. iii. 4, 13, 14; 1 Kings iv. 13), but which means "a sharply defined border, as if measured off by a *rope*" (*chebel*); and it thus describes, with singular accuracy and minuteness, the rocky rampart which encircles the Lejah.

THE DESERTED CITY.

The sun went down, and the short twilight was made shorter by heavy clouds which drifted across the face of the sky. A thick rain began to fall, which made the prospect of a night march or a bivouac equally unpleasant. Still I rode on through the darkness, striving to dispel gloomy forebodings by the stirring memory of Bashan's ancient glory, and the thought that I was now treading its soil, and on my way to the great cities founded and inhabited four thousand years ago by the giant Rephaim. Before the darkness set in, Mûsa had pointed out to me the towers of three or four of these cities rising above the rocky barrier of the Lejah. How I strained my eyes in vain to pierce the deepening gloom! Now I knew that some of them must be close at hand. The sharp ring of my horse's feet on pavement startled me. This was followed by painful stumbling over loose stones, and the twisting of his limbs among jagged rocks. The sky was black overhead; the ground black beneath; the rain was drifting in my face, so that nothing could be seen. A halt was called; and it was with no little pleasure I heard the order given for the caravan to rest till the moon rose. "Is there any spot," I asked of an Arab at my side, "where we could get shelter from the rain?" "There is a house ready for you," he answered. "A house! Is there a house here?" "Hundreds of them; this is the town of Burâk." We were conducted up a rugged winding path, which seemed, so far as we could make out in the dark and by the motion of our horses, to be something like a ruinous staircase. At length the dark outline of high walls began to appear against the sky, and presently we entered a paved street. Here we were told to dismount and give our horses to the servants. An Arab struck a light, and, inviting us to follow, passed through a low, gloomy door, into a spacious chamber.

I looked with no little interest round the apartment of

which we had taken such unceremonious possession; but the light was so dim, and the walls, roof, and floor so black, that I could make out nothing satisfactorily. Getting a torch from one of the servants I lighted it, and proceeded to examine the mysterious mansion; for, though drenched with rain, and wearied with a twelve hours' ride, I could not rest. I felt an excitement such as I never before had experienced. I could scarcely believe in the reality of what I saw, and what I heard from my guides in reply to eager questions. The house seemed to have undergone little change from the time its old master had left it; and yet the thick nitrous crust on the floor showed that it had been deserted for long ages. The walls were perfect, nearly five feet thick, built of large blocks of hewn stones, without lime or cement of any kind. The roof was formed of large slabs of the same black basalt, lying as regularly, and jointed as closely as if the workmen had only just completed them. They measured twelve feet in length, eighteen inches in breadth, and six inches in thickness. The ends rested on a plain stone cornice, projecting about a foot from each side wall. The chamber was twenty feet long, twelve wide, and ten high. The outer door was a slab of stone, four and a half feet high, four wide, and eight inches thick. It hung upon pivots formed of projecting parts of the slab, working in sockets in the lintel and threshold; and though so massive, I was able to open and shut it with ease. At one end of the room was a small window with a stone shutter. An inner door, also of stone, but of finer workmanship, and not quite so heavy as the other, admitted to a chamber of the same size and appearance. From it a much larger door communicated with a third chamber, to which there was a descent by a flight of stone steps. This was a spacious hall, equal in width to the two rooms, and about twenty-five feet long by twenty high. A semicircular arch was thrown across it, supporting the stone roof; and a gate so large that camels could pass in and out, opened on the street. The gate was of stone, and in its

place; but some rubbish had accumulated on the threshold, and it appeared to have been open for ages. Here our horses were comfortably installed. Such were the internal arrangements of this strange old mansion. It had only one story; and its simple, massive style of architecture gave evidence of a very remote antiquity. On a large stone which formed the lintel of the gateway, there was a Greek inscription; but it was so high up, and my light so faint, that I was unable to decipher it, though I could see that the letters were of the oldest type. It is probably the same which was copied by Burckhardt, and which bears a date apparently equivalent to the year B.C. 306!

Owing to the darkness of the night and the shortness of our stay, I was unable to ascertain from personal observation, either the extent of Burâk, or the general character of its buildings; but the men who gathered round me, when I returned to my chamber, had often visited it. They said the houses were all like the one we occupied, only some smaller, and a few larger, and that there were no great buildings. Burâk stands on the north-east corner of the Lejah, and was thus one of the frontier towns of ancient Argob. It is built upon rocks, and encompassed by rocks so wild and rugged as to render it a natural fortress.

After a few hours' rest, the order for march was again given. We found our horses at the door, and mounting at once we followed Musâ. The rain had ceased, the sky was clear, and the moon shone brightly, half revealing the savage features of the environs of Burâk. I can never forget that scene. Huge masses of shapeless rock rose up here and there among and around the houses, to the height of fifteen and twenty feet—their summits jagged, and their sides all shattered. Between them were pits and yawning fissures, as many feet in depth; while the flat surfaces of naked rock were thickly strewn with huge boulders of basalt. The narrow tortuous road by which Mûsa led us out was in places carried over chasms, and in places cut through cliffs. An an-

cient aqueduct ran alongside of it, which, in former days, conveyed a supply of water from a neighbouring winter stream to the tanks and reservoirs from which the town gets its present name, Burâk ("the tanks"). A slow but fatiguing ride of an hour brought us out of this labyrinth of rocks and over a torrent bed into a fine plain. We soon after passed the caravan, which had started some time before us; and, as there was no danger to be apprehended, we continued at a rapid pace southward. The dawn of morning showed us the rugged features and rocky border of the Lejah close upon our right, thickly studded with old towns and villages; while upon our left a fertile plain stretched away to the horizon. And here we observed with surprise, that there was not a trace of human habitation, except on the tops of the little conical hills which rise up at long intervals. This plain is the home of the Ishmaelite, who has always dwelt "in the presence (literally, *in the face*) of his brethren" (Gen. xvi. 12), and against whose bold incursions there never has been any effectual barrier except the munitions of rocks and the heights of hills.

We rode on. The hills of Bashan were close in front; their summits clothed with oak forests, and their sides studded with old towns. As we ascended them, the rock-fields of the Lejah were spread out on the right; and there, too, the ancient cities were thickly planted. Not less than thirty of the threescore cities of Argob were in view at one time on that day; their black houses and ruins half concealed by the black rocks amid which they are built, and their massive towers rising up here and there like the "keeps" of old Norman fortresses. How we longed to visit and explore them. But political reasons made it necessary we should, in the first place, pay our respects to one of the leading Druse chiefs. On them depended the success of our future researches. Without their protection we could not ride in safety a single mile through Haurân. I felt confident that protection would be cheerfully granted; still I

thought it best not to draw the bridle until we reached the town of Hiyât, from whence, after a short pause to drink coffee with the Sheikh, who *would not* let us pass, we rode to the residence of Assad Amer, at Hît, where we met with a reception worthy of the hospitality of the old patriarchs.

II.

"Once more we look, and all is still as night,
All desolate! Groves, temples, palaces,
Swept from the sight: and nothing visible,
. . . . save here and there
An empty tomb, a fragment like a limb
Of some dismembered giant."

SCENERY OF BASHAN.

With the first dawn of the new morning, I went up to the flat roof of Sheikh Assad's house. The house is in the highest part of the town, and commands a wide view of the northern section of the mountain range and of the surrounding plain. The sky was cloudless, and of that deep dark blue which one never sees in this land of clouds and haze. The rain of the preceding day had cleared the atmosphere, and rendered it transparent as crystal. The sun was not yet up, but his beams shed a rich glow over the whole eastern sky, making it gleam like burnished gold, and throwing out into bold relief a ridge of wood-clad peaks that here shut in the view. From the base of the mountain on the north, a smooth plain, already green with young grass, extended away beyond the range of vision, dotted here and there with conical tells, on whose tops were the remains of ancient fortresses and villages. But on the west lay the objects of chief interest; the widespread rock-fields of Argob, the rich pasture-lands of Bashan encircling them, and running away in one unbroken expanse to the base of Hermon.

Long and intently did my eyes dwell on that magnificent landscape. Now, the strange old cities rivetted my attention, rising up in gloomy grandeur from the sea of rocks. Now the great square towers and castellated heights and tells along the rugged border of Argob were minutely examined by the help of a powerful glass; and now the eye wandered eagerly over the plain beyond, noting one, and another, and another of those dark cities that stud it so thickly. On the western horizon rose Hermon, a spotless pyramid of snow; and from it, northward, ran the serried, snow-capped ridge of "Lebanon toward the sun-rising" (Josh. xiii. 5). As I looked on that western barrier of Bashan, the first sunbeams touched the crest of Hermon; and as they touched it, its icy crown glistened like polished steel, reminding me how strikingly descriptive was the name given to that mountain by the Amorites — *Shenir*, the "breastplate," or "shield" (Deut. iii. 9).

For an hour or more I sat rapt in the contemplation of the wide and wondrous panorama. At least a thousand square miles of Og's ancient kingdom were spread out before me. There was the country whose "giant" (*Rephaim*, Gen. xiv.) inhabitants the eastern kings smote before they descended into the plains of Sodom. There were those "three score great cities" of Argob, whose "walls, and gates, and brazen bars" were noted with surprise by Moses and the Israelites, and whose Cyclopean architecture and massive stone gates even now fill the western traveller with amazement, and give his simplest descriptions much of the charm and strangeness of romance. So clear was the air that the outline of the most distant objects was sharp and distinct. Hermon itself, though forty miles away, did not seem more than eight or ten, when the sun embossed its furrowed sides with light and shade.

I was at length roused from a pleasing reverie by the deep voice of Sheikh Assad giving a cordial and truly patriarchal salutation.

"What a glorious view you have from this commanding spot!" I said, when the compliments were over.

"Yes, we can see the Bedawîn at a great distance, and have time to prepare for them," was his characteristic reply.

"What! do the desert tribes, then, trouble you here; and do they even venture to plunder the Druses?"

"Not a spot of border land from Wady Musa to Aleppo is safe from their raids, and Druses, Moslems, and Christians are alike to them. In fact, their hand is against all. When the Anezeh come up in spring, their flocks cover that plain like locusts, and were it not for our rifles they would not leave us a hoof nor a blade of corn. To-day their horsemen pillage a village here; to-morrow, another in the Ghutah of Sham (Damascus); and the day following they strip the Baghdad caravan. Oh, my lord! these sons of Ishmael are fleet as gazelles, and fierce as leopards. Would Allah only rid us of them and the Turks, Syria *might* prosper."

The Sheikh described the Arabs to the life, just as they were described by the spirit of prophecy nearly four thousand years ago. "He (Ishmael) shall be a wild man; his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren" (Gen. xvi. 12). These "children of the east" come up now as they did in Gideon's days, when "they destroyed the increase of the earth, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; both they and their camels were without number; and they entered into the land to destroy it" (Judges vi. 4, 5). During the course of another tour through the western part of Bashan, I rode in one day for more than twenty miles in a straight course through the flocks of an Arab tribe.

On remarking to the Sheikh the great number of old

cities in view, he pointed out to me the largest and most remarkable of them; and among these I heard with no little interest, the name of Edrei, the ancient capital of Bashan, and the residence of Og, the last of its giant kings. Others there were too, such as Shuka, and Bathanyeh, and Musmieh, whose names, as we shall see, are not unknown in history.

From a general survey of the country I turned to an examination of the town. Hît is in form rectangular, and about a mile and a half in circumference. I traced most of the old streets, though now in a great measure filled up with fallen houses and heaps of rubbish, the accumulations of long centuries. The streets were narrow and irregular, and thus widely different from those laid out in many other cities in this land by Roman architects. A large portion of the town is ruinous; but some of the very oldest houses are still perfect. They are simple and massive in style, containing only one story, and generally two or three large rooms opening on an enclosed court. The walls are built of large stones roughly hewn, though closely jointed, and laid without cement. The roofs are formed of long slabs placed horizontally from wall to wall; thus forming the flat "house tops," where the people are now accustomed to sit and pray, just as they were in New Testament times. Indeed, the "house-top" is the favourite prayer-place of Mohammedans in Syria (see Acts x. 9; Matt. xxiv. 17; Isa. xv. 3; Zeph. i. 5). The doors are stone, and I saw many tastefully ornamented with panels and garlands of fruit and flowers sculptured in relief. There is not a single *new*, or even *modern*, house in Hît. The Druses have taken possession and settled down without any attempt at alteration or addition. Those now occupied are evidently of the most remote antiquity, and not more than half of the *habitable* dwellings are inhabited. I saw the remains of several Greek or Roman temples, and a considerable number of Greek inscriptions on the old houses, and on loose

stones. The inscriptions have no historic value, being chiefly votive and memorial tablets: two of them have dates corresponding to A.D. 120, and A.D. 208. Nothing is known of the history of Hît; we cannot even tell its ancient name; but its position, the character of its houses and of its old massive ramparts, seem to warrant the conclusion that it was one of those "three score great cities" which Jair captured in Argob (Deut. iii. 4, 14).

The news of our arrival had already reached Sheikh Fares, the elder brother of our host, and one of the most powerful chiefs in Haurân. While we sat at breakfast a messenger arrived with an urgent request that we should visit him and spend the night at his house in Shuhba. We gladly consented; and as that town is only four miles south of Hît, we resolved to employ the day in exploring the northern section of the mountain range. Our horses were soon at the door. Sheikh Assad supplied an active, intelligent, and well-mounted guide, and his own nephew, a noble-looking youth of one-and-twenty, volunteered his services as escort. Mounting at once, amid the respectful salâms of a crowd of white-turbaned Druses, we rode off northward in the track of an old Roman road. Finely-cultivated fields skirted our path for some distance, already green with young wheat, and giving promise of luxuriance such as is seldom seen in Palestine. The day was bright and cool, the ground firm and smooth, our horses fresh, and our own spirits high. Our new companions, too, were eager to display the mettle of their steeds, and their unrivalled skill in horsemanship. So, loosening the rein, we dashed across the gentle slopes, and only drew bridle on reaching Bathanyeh, about four miles from Hît. Along our route for a mile and more, we observed the opening of a subterranean aqueduct, intended in former days to supply the city with water. Such aqueducts are common on the eastern border of Syria and Palestine, especially in Haurân and the plain of Damascus. They appear to have been con-

structed as follows:—A shaft was sunk to the depth of from ten to twenty feet, at a spot where it was supposed water might be found; then a tunnel was excavated on the level of the bottom of the shaft, and in the direction of the town to be supplied. At a distance of about a hundred yards another shaft was sunk, connecting the tunnel with the surface; and so the work was carried on until it was brought close to the city, where a great reservoir was made. Some of these aqueducts are nearly twenty miles in length; and even though no living spring should exist along their whole course, they soon collect in the rainy season sufficient surface water to supply the largest reservoirs. Springs are rare in Bashan. It is a thirsty land; but cisterns of enormous dimensions—some open, others covered—are seen in every city and village. It was doubtless by some such "conduit" as this that Hezekiah took water into Jerusalem from the upper spring of Gihon (2 Kings xx. 20).

ANCIENT CITIES.

Scrambling through, or rather over, a ruinous gateway, we entered the city of Bathanyeh. A wide street lay before us, the pavement perfect, the houses on each side standing, streets and lanes branching off to the right and left. There was something inexpressibly mournful in riding along that silent street, and looking in through half-open doors to one after another of those desolate houses, with the rank grass and weeds in their courts, and the brambles growing in festoons over the doorways, and branches of trees shooting through the gaping rents in the old walls. The ring of our horses' feet on the pavement awakened the echoes of the city, and startled many a strange tenant. Owls flapped their wings round the gray towers; daws shrieked as they flew away from the house-tops; foxes ran out and in among shattered dwellings, and two jackals rushed from an open door, and scampered off along the street before us. The graphic language of Isaiah, uttered

regarding another city, but vividly descriptive of desolation in any place, came up at once to my mind and to my lips:—"Wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there" (Isa. xiii. 21).

Bathanyeh stands on the northern declivity of the mountains of Bashan, and commands a view of the boundless plain towards the lakes of Damascus. About a mile and a half to the north-west I saw two large villages close together. Two miles further, on the top of a high tell, were the ruins of a town, which, my guides said, are both extensive and beautiful. Three other towns were visible in the plain, and two on the slopes eastward. How we wished to visit these! but time would not permit. From this, as from every other point where I reached the limits of my prescribed tour, I turned aside with regret; because away beyond, the eye rested on enticing ruins, and unexplored towns and villages.

Bathanyeh is not quite so large as Hît, but the buildings are of a superior character and in much better preservation. One of the houses in which I rested for a time might almost be termed a palace. A spacious gateway, with massive folding-doors of stone, opened from the street into a large court. On the left was a square tower some forty feet in height. Round the court, and opening into it, were the apartments, all in perfect preservation; and yet the place does not seem to have been inhabited for centuries. Greek inscriptions on the principal buildings prove that they existed at the commencement of our era; and in the whole town I did not see a solitary trace of Mohammedan occupation, so that it has probably been deserted for at least a thousand years. The name at once suggests its identity with *Batanis*, one of the thirty-four ecclesiastical cities of Arabia, whose bishops were in the fifth century suffragans of the primate of Bostra. Batanis was the capital of the Greek province of Batanæa, a part of the te-

trarchy of Philip, mentioned by Josephus, but included by Luke (iii. 1) in the "region of Trachonitis." The region round it is still called "the Land of Batanea;" and the name is interesting as a modern representative of the Scriptural *Bashan.*

Turning away from this interesting place, we rode along the mountain side eastward to Shuka, four miles distant. This is also a very old town, and must at one time have contained at least 20,000 inhabitants, though now it has scarcely twenty families. Ptolemy, the Greek geographer, calls it *Saccaea.* It was evidently rebuilt by the Romans, as only a very few of its antique massive houses remain, and the shattered ruins of temples are seen on every side. One of these temples was long used as a church, and the ruins of another church also exist, which, an inscription tells us, was dedicated by Bishop Tiberinos to St. George in A.D. 369. Around Shuka are some remarkable tombs, square towers, about twenty feet on each side, and from thirty to forty high, divided into stories. Tablets over the doors record the names of the dead who once lay there, and the dates of their death. They are of the first and second centuries of our era. They have been all rifled, so that we cannot tell how the bodies were deposited, though probably the arrangements were similar to those in the tombs of Palmyra. From the ruins of Shuka three other towns were in sight among the hills on the east.

Remounting, we rode for ten miles through a rich agricultural district to Shuhba. We passed only one village, but we saw several towns on the wooded sides of the mountain to the left, and numerous others down on the plain to the right. Crossing a rugged ravine, and ascending a steep bank, we reached the walls of Shuhba. They are completely ruined, so much so, that the only way into the city is over them, beside a beautiful Roman gateway, now blocked up with rubbish. Having entered, we proceeded along a well-paved street—the most perfect speci-

men of Roman pavement I had yet seen—to the residence of the chief. In the large area in front of his mansion we found a crowd of eager people, and the first to hold out the hand of welcome was our kind host of the previous night, Sheikh Assad. He introduced us to his brother Fares, and we were then ushered into an apartment where we found comfort, smiling faces, and a hearty welcome.

Shuhba is almost entirely a Roman city—the ramparts are Roman, the streets have the old Roman pavement, Roman temples appear in every quarter, a Roman theatre remains nearly perfect, a Roman aqueduct brought water from the distant mountains, inscriptions of the Roman age, though in Greek, are found on every public building. A few of the ancient massive houses, with their stone doors and stone roofs, yet exist, but they are in a great measure concealed or built over with the later and more graceful structures of Greek and Roman origin. Though this city was nearly three miles in circuit, and abounded in splendid buildings, its ancient name is lost, and its ancient history unknown. Its modern name is derived from a princely Mohammedan family which settled here in the seventh century. The Emir Beshir *Shehab*, the last of the native rulers of Lebanon, was a member of the family, and so also was the Emir Saad-ed-Dîn, who was murdered in the late massacre at Hasbeiya on the side of Hermon.

Beside Shuhba is a little cup-shaped hill which caught my eye the moment I entered the city. On ascending I found it to be the crater of an extinct volcano, deeply covered with ashes, cinders, and scoriæ—one of the centres, doubtless, of that terrific convulsion which in some remote age heaved up the mountains of Bashan, and spread out the molten lava which cooled into the rock fields of Argob. From the summit I had a near and distinct view of the south-eastern section of Argob. Its features are even wilder and drearier than those of the northern. The rocks are higher, the glens deeper and more tortuous. It looks,

in fact, like the ruins of a country, and yet towns and villages are thickly studded over that wilderness of rocks. The mountains which rise behind Shuhba on the east are terraced half-way up, and their tops are clothed with oak forests. The vine and the fig flourished here luxuriantly in the days of Bashan's glory, winter streams then irrigated and enriched the slopes, and filled the great cisterns in every city; but the Lord said in his wrath, "I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs; and I will make the rivers islands, and I will dry up the pools" (Isa. xlii. 15), and now I *saw* that the words of the Lord were literally and fearfully true.

Sheikh Fares and his brother made all requisite arrangements for our future tour through Bashan. They told us that so long as we travelled in the Druse country we should be perfectly safe; no hand, no tongue, would be lifted against us; a welcome would meet us in every village, and a cordial wish for our welfare follow us on every path. We knew this, for we knew that policy as well as the sacred laws of Oriental hospitality, would restrain the Druses to aid and protect us to the utmost of their power. They warned us, however, that some parts of our proposed journey would be attended with considerable risk. They told us plainly that the Mohammedans could not be trusted, and that if we attempted to penetrate the Lejah (Argob), all the power of the Druses might not be sufficient to save us from the fury of excited fanatics. We attributed these warnings to the best motives, but we thought them exaggerated. To our cost we afterwards found that they were only too much needed. Sheikh Fares gave us one of the most intelligent and active of his men as guide and companion, he also supplied horses for our servants and baggage, and a Druse escort. Thus equipped, we bade farewell to our kind and generous host, and set out on our journey southward. For more than an hour we followed the course of a Roman road along the western declivity of the mountain range, passing

several old villages on the right and left. At one of these villages, picturesquely situated in a secluded glen, we saw a long procession of Druse women near a clump of newly made graves. They had a strange unearthly look. The silver horns which they wear upright on their heads, were nearly two feet long, over these were thrown white veils, enveloping the whole person, and reaching to the ground, thus giving them a stature apparently far exceeding that of mortals. As they marched with stately steps round the tombs, they sung a wild chant that now echoed through the whole glen, and now sunk into the mournful cadence of a death-wail. I asked the meaning of this singular and striking scene, and was told that eleven of the bravest men in the village had fallen in the late war, these were their graves, and now the principal women of Shuhba had come to comfort and mourn with the wives of the slain; just as, in the time of our Lord, many of the Jews came from Jerusalem "to comfort Martha and Mary concerning their brother Lazarus" (John xi. 18–31).

Descending a rugged bank into a rich plain, a quarter of an hour's gallop brought us to Suleim, a small but ancient town, containing the remains of a beautiful temple, and some other imposing buildings. A few Druses, who find ample accommodation in the old houses, gathered round us, and pressed us to accept their hospitality. We were compelled to decline, and after examining a group of remarkable subterranean cisterns, we mounted again and turned eastward up a picturesque valley to Kunawât. The scenery became richer and grander as we ascended. The highest peaks of the mountains of Bashan were before us, wooded to their summits. On each side were terraced slopes, broken here and there by a dark cliff or rugged brake, and sprinkled with oaks; in the bottom of the dell below, a tiny stream, the first we had seen in Bashan, leaped joyously from rock to rock, while luxuriant evergreens embraced each other over its murmuring waters. From the top of every rising

ground we looked out over jungle and grove to gray ruins, which here and there reared themselves proudly above dense masses of foliage. Diving into the dell by a path that would try the nerves of a mountain goat, we crossed the streamlet and wound up a rocky bank, among giant oaks and thick underwood, to an old building which crowns a cliff impending over the glen. As we rode up we could obtain a glimpse of its gray walls here and there through dark openings, but on reaching the broad terrace in front of it, and especially on entering its spacious court, we were struck as much with its extent as with the beauty of its architecture. The doorway is encircled by a broad border of the fruit and foliage of the vine, entwined with roses and lilies, sculptured in bold relief, and with equal accuracy of design and delicacy of execution. The court was surrounded by cloisters supported by Ionic columns, but nearly all gone now. On the north side is a projection containing a building at one period used as a church, but probably originally intended for a temple. The ruins of another building, the shrine or sanctuary of the whole, are strewn over the centre of the quadrangle. The graceful pillars, and sculptured pediment, and cornice with its garlands of flowers, lie in shapeless heaps beneath the shade of oak trees, and almost concealed by thorns and thistles. Yes, the *curse* is visible there, not so painfully visible perhaps as in Western Palestine, where only a few stones or heaps of rubbish mark the site of great cities, yet still visible in crumbling wall and prostrate column, and in those very brambles that weave a beauteous mantle round the fallen monuments of man's genius and power. "Thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof."—They are here.

And other evidences of the curse were there too. As we approached the ruin not a living creature was visible. The air was still, and the silence of death appeared to reign over glen and mountain. A solitary fox leaped from his den by the great gateway as our feet crossed the threshold, and

took refuge in a neighbouring thicket, but this seemed to be the only tenant alike of temple and forest. So it seemed, and so we thought; yet, before we were fifteen minutes among the ruins, three or four wild-looking heads were observed peering over a cairn of stones, and the sunbeams glanced from the barrels of their levelled muskets. We went on with our examinations, and the wild heads and glittering barrels went on increasing. Mahmood, our Druse guide, fortunately saw them, and stepping out from the shade of the portico, where we had left him with the horses, he hinted that it would be well for us to keep near him, and complete our researches as speedily as possible. We soon mounted, and as we defiled through the forest a score of fierce Bedawîn, armed with gun and pistol, leaped from their hiding-places, and lined our path. We were startled, and began to think that our tour was about to come to a speedy and unpleasant termination; but Mahmood rode on in silence, not deigning to turn his head, or direct a single look to these daring outlaws. We followed in close file, and as I brought up the rear, I thought it well to give them the customary salutation, *Ullah mâkum*, "God be with you." Not a man of them returned it; and plainly, as if the words had been written on their scowling faces, I saw that they were cursing inwardly the stern necessity that kept their hands off us. These we afterwards learned are the chief inhabitants of the mountains of Bashan—reckless, lawless, thieving vagabonds, who live by plunder, and glory in their success as freebooters. The Druses keep them in check, and they know well that a terrible vengeance would be taken on them if they should dare to interfere with any one enjoying Druse protection. How applicable to this section of Palestine, and to many another, are the words of Isaiah,—"Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire; your land, *strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers*" (i. 7).

KENATH.

A few minutes' ride brought us to the brow of a hill commanding a view of Kunawât. On the left was a deep dark ravine, and on the sloping ground along its western bank lie the ruins of the ancient city. The wall, still in many places almost perfect, follows the top of the cliffs for nearly a mile, and then sweeps round in a zigzag course, enclosing a space about half a mile wide. The general aspect of the city is very striking—temples, palaces, churches, theatres, and massive buildings whose original use we cannot tell, are grouped together in picturesque confusion; while beyond the walls, in the glen, on the summits and sides of wooded peaks, away in the midst of oak forests, are clusters of columns and massive towers, and lofty tombs. The leading streets are wide and regular, and the roads radiating from the city gates are unusually numerous and spacious.

While the Israelites were engaged in the conquest of the country east of the Jordan, Moses tells us that "Nobah went and took *Kenath*, and the villages thereof, and called it Nobah, after his own name" (Num. xxxii. 42). Kenath was now before us. The name was changed into *Canatha* by the Greeks; and the Arabs have made it *Kunawât*. During the Roman rule it was one of the principal cities east of the Jordan; and at a very early period it had a large Christian population, and became the seat of a bishopric. It appears to have been almost wholly rebuilt about the commencement of our era, and is mentioned by most of those Greek and Roman writers who treat of the geography or history of Syria. At the Saracenic conquest Kenath fell into the hands of the Mohammedans, and then its doom was sealed. There are no traces of any lengthened Mohammedan occupation, for there is not a single mosque in the whole town. The heathen temples were all converted into churches, and two or three new churches were built; but

none of these buildings were ever used as mosques, as such buildings were in most of the other great cities of Syria.

We spent the afternoon and some hours of the next day in exploring Kenath. Many of the ruins are beautiful and interesting. The highest part of the site was the aristocratic quarter. Here is a noble palace, no less than three temples, and a hippodrome once profusely adorned with statues. In no other city of Palestine did I see so many statues as there are here. Unfortunately they are all mutilated; but fragments of them — heads, legs, arms, torsos, with equestrian figures, lions, leopards, and dogs—meet one on every side. A colossal head of Ashteroth, sadly broken, lies before a little temple, of which probably it was once the chief idol. The crescent moon which gave the goddess the name *Carnaim* ("two-horned"), is on her brow. I was much interested in this fragment, because it is a visible illustration of an incidental allusion to this ancient goddess in the very earliest historic reference to Bashan. We read in Gen. xiv. 5, that the kings of the East, on their way to Sodom, "smote the Rephaims in *Ashteroth-Karnaim.*" May not this be the very city? We found on examination that the whole area in front of the palace has long ranges of lofty arched cisterns beneath it, something like the temple court at Jerusalem. These seemed large enough to supply the wants of the city during the summer. They were filled by means of an aqueduct excavated in the bank of the ravine, and connected probably with some spring in the mountains. The tombs of Kenath are similar to those of Palmyra—high square towers divided into stories, each story containing a single chamber, with recesses along the sides for bodies. About a quarter of a mile west of the city is a beautiful peripteral temple of the Corinthian order, built on an artificial platform. Many of the columns have fallen, and the walls are much shattered; but enough remains to make this one of the most picturesque ruins in the whole country.

Early in the morning we set out to examine the ruins in the glen, and to scale a high cliff on its opposite bank, where we had noticed a singular round tower and some heavy fragments of walls. The glen appears to have been anciently laid out as a park or pleasure ground. We found terraced walks, and little fountains now dry, and pedestals for statues, a miniature temple, and a rustic opera, whose benches are hewn in the side of the cliff; a Greek inscription in large characters round the front of the stage, tells us that it was erected by a certain Marcus Lusias, at his own expense, and given to his fellow-citizens. From the opera a winding stair-case, hewn in the rock, leads up to the round tower on the summit of the cliff. We ascended, and were well repaid alike for our early start and toil. The tower itself has little interest; it is thirty yards in circuit, and now about twenty feet high; the masonry is colossal and of great antiquity. Beside it are the remains of a castle or palace, built of bevelled stones of enormous size. The doors are all of stone, and some of them are ornamented with panels and fretted mouldings, and wreaths of fruit and flowers sculptured in high relief. In one door I observed a place for a massive lock or bar; perhaps one of those "brazen bars" to which allusion is made by the sacred writers (I Kings iv. 13). But it was the glorious view which these ruins command that mainly charmed us. As I sat down on a great stone on the brow of the ravine, my eye wandered over one of the most beautiful panoramas I ever beheld. From many a spot amid the lofty peaks of Lebanon I had looked on wilder and grander scenery. Standing on the towering summit of the castle at Palmyra, ruins more extensive and buildings far more magnificent lay at my feet. From the Cyclopean walls of the Temple of the Sun at Baalbec I saw prouder monuments of man's genius, and more exquisite memorials of his taste and skill. But never before had I looked on a scene which nature, and art, and destruction had so combined to adorn. It was not the wild grand-

eur of Lebanon, with beetling cliff and snow-capped peak; it was not the flat and featureless Baalbec, with its Cyclopean walls and unrivalled columns; it was not the blasted desolation of Palmyra, where white ruins are thickly strewn over a white plain. Here were hill and dale, wooded slopes and wild secluded glens, frowning cliffs and battlemented heights, moss-grown ruins and groups of tapering columns springing up from the dense foliage of the oaks of Bashan. Hitherto I had been struck with the nakedness of Syrian ruins. They are half-buried in dust, or they are strewn over mounds of rubbish, or they lie prostrate on the bare gravelly soil; and, though the shafts are graceful, the capitals chaste, the fretwork of frieze and cornice rich, yet, as pictures, they contrast poorly with the ivy-mantled abbeys of England, and the nature-clothed castles of the Rhine. Amid the hills of Bashan, however, the scene is changed. The fresh foliage hides defects, and enhances the beauty of stately portico and massive wall, while luxuriant creepers twine round the pillars, and wreathe the volutes of the capitals with garlands.

SHEPHERDS LEADING THEIR FLOCKS.

As we sat and looked, almost spell-bound, the silent hillsides around us were in a moment filled with life and sound. The shepherds led their flocks forth from the gates of the city. They were in full view, and we watched them and listened to them with no little interest. Thousands of sheep and goats were there, grouped in dense, confused masses. The shepherds stood together until all came out. Then they separated, each shepherd taking a different path, and uttering as he advanced a shrill peculiar call. The sheep heard them. At first the masses swayed and moved, as if shaken by some internal convulsion; then points struck out in the direction taken by the shepherds; these became longer and longer until the confused masses were resolved into long, living streams, flowing after their leaders. Such a

sight was not new to me, still it had lost none of its interest. It was perhaps one of the most vivid illustrations which human eyes could witness of that beautiful discourse of our Lord recorded by John—"And the sheep hear the shepherd's voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out, and when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him; for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow: for they know not the voice of strangers" (x. 3–5).

The shepherds themselves had none of that peaceful and placid aspect which is generally associated with pastoral life and habits. They looked more like warriors marching to the battle-field—a long gun slung from the shoulder, a dagger and heavy pistols in the belt, a light battle-axe or iron-headed club in the hand. Such were their equipments; and their fierce flashing eyes and scowling countenances showed but too plainly that they were prepared to use their weapons at any moment. They were all Arabs—not the true sons of the desert, but a mongrel race living in the mountains, and acting as shepherds to the Druses while feeding their own flocks. Their costume is different from that of the Druses, and almost the same as that of the desert Arabs—a coarse shirt of blue calico bound round the waist by a leathern girdle, a loose robe of goats' hair, and a handkerchief thrown over the head and fastened by a fillet of camels' hair—such is their whole costume, and it is filthy besides, and generally in rags.

THE DRUSES.

From Kunawât we saw two large deserted villages higher up the mountains, and a large deserted town below on the borders of the plain. These we had not time to visit. The hospitable Druses repeatedly urged us to spend another day with them; and we felt a strong inclination to linger in this old city, for there was much to interest us, not in the ruins merely, but likewise in the modern inhabitants. When

squatting in the evening in the large reception room of the sheikh's house we observed with some surprise that though it was often crowded with Druses, old and young, not a man of them tasted coffee or tobacco except Mahmood. They all belonged to the order of *Ukala*, or "initiated;" and they are Nazirites in the widest sense. Kunawât, in fact, is almost a holy city for the Druses; their great religious chief resides here, and this place is consequently the centre of power and intrigue. They are a remarkable people. Their religion is a mystery; their manners are simple and patriarchal; their union and courage are proverbial; and though small in number they form the most powerful party in Syria. Whenever danger threatens, or whenever they find it expedient to resist the demands or exactions of the Porte, they congregate in the Haurân, and no force has ever been found sufficient to dislodge or subdue them. Here they defied Ibrahim Pasha, and destroyed the flower of the Egyptian army; here they have once and again defeated the Turkish troops, and driven them back with disgrace to the very walls of Damascus. Physically they are the finest race in Western Asia—tall, stalwart, hardy mountaineers. Accustomed from childhood to vigorous exercise, and trained in athletic sports and the use of arms, they form a body of brave and daring "irregulars" such as the world could scarcely match. But the grand secret of their power is their union. They act together as one man. Brotherly union in peace and war, in prosperity and adversity, is the chief article of their religious creed. As regards religion they are divided into two classes, the *Initiated* and the *Ignorant*. With the former the rites, ceremonies, and doctrines remain a profound secret. The holy books are preserved and read by them alone. They assemble in chapels every Thursday evening, refusing admission to all others. What they do then and there is unknown; but there is reason to believe that these meetings are quite as much of a political as a religious character.

The Druse sheikhs form a hereditary nobility, and preserve with great tenacity all the pride and state of their order. They receive and entertain travellers with profuse hospitality, and no compensation in money can be offered to them. To strangers, under ordinary circumstances, they are obliging, communicative, and faithful. In time of peace they are industrious and courteous; but in war they are noted alike for daring courage and unsparing ferocity. When among this strange and primitive people in Bashan, I felt at once that I was out of the beaten track of tourists, where one can pitch his tent, picket his horses, cook his provisions, and march again, caring for nobody, and nobody caring for him. Here all is different. We are among a people of patriarchal manners and genuine patriarchal hospitality. We were looked on and treated as welcome guests. We could not pass town or village without being entreated to accept hospitality. "Will not my lord descend while his servants prepare a little food?" is the urgent language of every village sheikh. The coffee is always on the hearth; a kid or lamb—representative of the old "fatted calf"—is at hand, and can be "got ready" with all the despatch of ancient days. Food for servants, "provender" for horses, accommodation for all, are given as matters of course. In travelling through Bashan one fancies himself carried back to the days when the patriarchs sat in their tent-doors, ready to welcome every visitor and hail every passer-by.

III.

"And Bashan and Carmel shake off their fruits."

This text was constantly in my mind while I wandered through Bashan. In riding down from the ruins of Kenath, among the mountains, to the ruins of Suweideh at their base, it struck me that the beautiful words in which Cow-

per describes modern Sicily, are strikingly descriptive of modern Palestine.

> "Alas for Sicily! rude fragments now
> Lie scattered where the shapely column stood.
> Her palaces are dust. In all her streets
> The voice of singing, and the sprightly chord
> Are silent. Revelry, and dance, and show
> Suffer a syncope and solemn pause;
> While God performs upon the trembling stage
> Of his own works his dreadful part alone."

We might begin, "Alas for Palestine!" and go on through the whole passage; for Palestine's palaces are dust, her stately columns fallen, her streets silent, her fields desolate, while God alone performs his dreadful part, fulfilling to the very letter the prophetic curses pronounced upon the land long, long centuries ago.

WONDERFUL FULFILMENT OF PROPHECY.

We rode along the line of the Roman road, at least as closely as branches of the great old oaks, and jungles of thorns and bushes, would permit; for "*the highways lie waste*" (Isa. xxxiii. 8). Every opening to the right and left revealed ruins;—now a tomb in a quiet nook; now a temple in a lonely forest glade; now a shapeless and nameless heap of stones and fallen columns; and now, through a long green vista, the shattered walls and towers of an ancient city. The country is filled with ruins. In every direction to which the eye turns, in every spot on which it rests, ruins are visible—so truly, so wonderfully have the prophecies been fulfilled: "*I will destroy your high places, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation*" (Lev. xxvi. 30). "*The palaces shall be forsaken*" (Isa. xxxii. 14). "*I will make your cities waste. The land shall be utterly spoiled*" (Isa. xxiv. 3). Many other ruins, doubtless, lie concealed among the forests, buried beneath giant oaks, or shrouded by luxuriant brambles. Judging by the "thorns and thistles" which hem in every path, and half conceal every ruin, one

would suppose that Bashan had received a double portion of the curse.

The mountains of Bashan, though not generally very steep, are rugged and rocky; yet everywhere on their sides I saw the remains of old terraces—along every slope, up every bank, from the bottom of the deepest glen, where the oleander bends over the tiny streamlet, to the highest peak on which the clouds of heaven sleep, cradled on winter snows. These tell of former toil and industry; and so do the heaps of loose stones that have been collected off the soil, and piled up in the corners of the little fields. In the days of Bashan's glory, fig-trees, and olives, and pomegranates, were ranged along those terraces; and vines hung down in rich festoons over their broken walls. But now Bashan *has* shaken off its fruits. "*For a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number. He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig-tree; he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away. The field is wasted, the land mourneth. The new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth. The vine is dried up, the fig-tree languisheth; the pomegranate-tree, the palm-tree also, and the apple-tree; even all the trees of the field are withered; because joy is withered away from the sons of men*" (Joel i. 6–12).

The scenery is still rich. It is rich in the foliage of the evergreen oak—the "oak of Bashan;" rich in numbers of evergreen shrubs; rich in green pastures. It is picturesque too, and occasionally even grand; for the glens are deep and winding, and the outlines of the intervening ridges varied with many a dark cliff and wooded bank. The whole mountain range is of volcanic origin, and the peaks shoot up, conical or cup-shaped, forming long serried lines. One thing struck me as peculiar. The rocks are black, the soil is black, the buildings are all black. It might be thought that the landscape would thus have a gloomy aspect; and it would have, were it not for the fresh green grass of the glades and meadows, and the brilliant foliage of the oak

forests, which often glitter beneath the blaze of sunshine like forests of prisms.

I confess it was with feelings of awe I looked from time to time out over those desolate, but still beautiful slopes, to that more desolate plain. I knew what caused the desolation. The silence, too, awed me yet more, for it was profound. The voice of nature itself was hushed, and not a leaf in the forest rustled. There is always something cheerful, something reviving to the flagging spirit, in the unceasing murmur of a great city, now rising and now falling on the breeze, as one approaches it or passes by; and in the continuous hum of a rural scene, where the call of the herd, and the whistle of the ploughman, and the roll of the waggon, and the bleatings of the flock, and the lowing of the kine, melt into one of nature's choruses. Here cities studded the whole country, but the stillness of death reigned in them; there was no ploughman in the field, no shepherd on the hill-side, no flock on the pasture, no waggon, no wayfarer on the road. Yet there was a time when the land teemed with an industrious, a bustling, and a joyous population. At that time prophets wrote: "*Your highways shall be desolate*" (Lev. xxvi. 22). "*The wayfaring man ceaseth. The earth mourneth and languisheth*" (Isa. xxxiii. 8). "*The land shall be utterly emptied and utterly spoiled; for the Lord hath spoken this word. Therefore hath the curse devoured the land. Therefore the inhabitants of the land are consumed, and few men left. Every house is shut up. The mirth of the land is gone. In the city is left desolation, and the gate is smitten with destruction*" (Isa. xxiv. 3–12). Many of the people of those days, doubtless, thought the prophets were but gloomy dreamers. Just as many in our own day regard their writings as gorgeous fancy pictures of Eastern poets; but with my own eyes I *saw* that time has changed every prediction into a historic fact. I saw now, and I saw at every step through Bashan, that the visions of the prophets were not

delusions; that they were not even, as some modern critics suppose, highly wrought figures, intended perhaps to foreshadow in faint outline a few leading facts of the country's future story. I saw that they were, one and all, graphic and detailed descriptions of real events, which the Divine Spirit opened up to the prophet's eye through the long vista of ages. The language is, doubtless, beautiful, the style is poetic, and gorgeous Eastern imagery is often employed to give sublimity to the visions of the seer, and to the words of the Lord; but this does not take away one iota from their truth, nor does it detract in the slightest degree from their graphic power. Were the same holy men inspired now by the same Divine Spirit to describe the actual state of Palestine, they could not possibly select language more appropriate or more graphic than that found in their own predictions written thousands of years ago. This is no vague statement made at random, or penned for effect. God forbid I should ever pen a single line rashly or thoughtlessly on such a topic. It is the result of years of study and years of travel. It is the result of a calm and thorough comparison of each prophecy of Scripture regarding Palestine's history and doom with its fulfilment, upon the spot. I had no preconceived theory of prophetic interpretation to defend. My mind was not biassed by a false faith in literality on the one side, nor by a fatal scepticism regarding prophetic reality on the other. Opportunities were afforded me of examining evidence, of testing witnesses, of seeing with my own eyes the truth or the falsehood of Bible predictions. I embraced these opportunities, as God gave them, and to the utmost of my power and the best of my ability. I examined deliberately, cautiously, and, I believe, conscientiously. My examinations extended over *all* Palestine, and over most other Bible lands; and now I thank God that, with the fullest and deepest conviction—conviction that all the ingenuity of modern criticism, and all the plausibility of modern scien-

tific scepticism can never overthrow, could never shake—I can take up and re-echo the grand, the cheering statement of our blessed Lord, and proclaim my belief before the world, that "*Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled.*"

I observed around Kenath, and especially in the thickest parts of the forest on the way to Suweideh, that many of the largest and finest oak trees were burned almost through near the ground, and that a vast number of huge trunks were lying black and charred among the stones and brushwood. I wondered at what appeared to be a piece of wanton and toilsome destruction, and I asked Mahmood if he could explain it.

"The Bedawîn do it," he replied. "They make large quantities of charcoal for the Damascus market, as well as for home use; and that they may get more easily at the branches, which are the only parts of the tree used, they kindle a fire round the roots of the largest oaks, burn them deeply, and then the first blast of wind blows them over, and the boughs are chopped off with little axes."

"But," I said, "in this way they destroy vast quantities of splendid timber."

"True; but they do not care. All they want is a present supply, and they try to get it in the easiest way possible."

"They will soon make your mountains as bare as Jebel esh-Sheikh, and where will you go for firewood and charcoal then? You are fools to permit such needless waste and destruction."

"O my lord?" said Mahmood—and there was a degree of solemnity and pathos both in his tone and in his words—"O my lord! it is you Franks alone who have wisdom to look to the future, and power to provide for it. We! what can we do in this unhappy country? We are all wanderers—here to-day, away to-morrow. Should we attempt to preserve these oaks, or to plant vineyards and olives, or to

spend labour and money on fields or houses, we would only be working out our own ruin. The Bedawîn would be attracted in clouds round the tempting fruit; and the Turks would come, drive us out with their cannon, and seize our whole property. No, no! We can have no permanent interest in the ground. We can only hold it as we have got it, by the sword; and the poorer it looks, the less will our enemies covet it."

It was a sad picture, and, unfortunately, a true one. By such mad acts, and by still more wanton destruction in times of war, and of party and family struggles, fruit-trees and forests have been almost annihilated in Palestine. And would it not seem as if the old prophets had been able to look down through the mists of long centuries, and to see the progress and the effects of this very mode of ruin and desolation, clearly as I saw it in Bashan? Isaiah thus wrote: "The defenced city shall be desolate, and the habitation forsaken, and left like a wilderness: there shall the calf feed, and there shall he lie down, and consume the branches thereof. *When the boughs thereof are withered they shall be broken off; the women come and set them on fire; for it is a people of no understanding*" (Isa. xxvii. 10, 11).

Descending from Kenath, I saw, about a mile to the right, the deserted town of Atyl. Burckhardt and one or two others visited it, but I was compelled from want of time to pass it by. It contains some fine buildings, among which are two beautiful temples nearly perfect. One of them was built in the fourteenth year of the Emperor Antonine (A.D. 150), as a Greek inscription tells us. Like Kenath, this city was in a great measure rebuilt during the Roman age, and consequently there are not many of the very ancient massive houses now remaining. Further down on the plain I saw Rimeh and Welgha, two deserted towns. Every view we got in Bashan was an ocular demonstration of the literal fulfilment of the curse pronounced on the land by Moses, more than three thousand years ago: "*If ye will*

not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments. . . . . I will scatter you among the heathen; and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste" (Lev. xxvi. 14, 33).

THE RUINS OF SUWEIDEH.

Emerging from the oak forests we found ourselves on a low bare ridge which juts out from the mountains some distance into the plain. It is divided down the centre by a deep rocky ravine, through which a winter torrent flows. The portion of this ridge south of the ravine is covered with the ruins of Suweideh. We were riding up to them when my attention was attracted by a singular monument standing alone on a commanding site, a few hundred yards north of the city. It is a square tower, about thirty feet high. The sides are ornamented with Doric semi-columns supporting a plain cornice, and between them, on panels, are shields, helmets, and trophies of arms sculptured in relief. A legend, inscribed in Greek and Palmyrene, states that "*Odainatus, son of Annelos, built this monument to Chamrâte, his wife.*" Few and simple are the words. The story of Chamrate is unknown. What were her private virtues, or public services, we cannot tell. Strange that this monument should stand as the tribute of a husband's admiration and love, when the histories of husband, wife, and native city have passed away for long centuries! It is worthy of note that Odainatus was the name of the celebrated husband of the still more celebrated Zenobia. The Palmyrene inscription on the monument would seem to indicate that its founder was a native of the desert city. Perhaps the great Odainatus himself, during his warlike expedition into Syria, may have thus celebrated the virtues of a former wife.

Crossing the ravine by a Roman bridge, we rode up to Suweideh, and under the guidance of the sheikh's son, a fine manly boy of some fourteen years, splendidly dressed

in a scarlet robe, and armed with silver-hilted sword and dagger, we proceeded to examine in detail the wide-spread ruins. We visited a Corinthian peristyle; a Roman gateway at the end of a straight street, nearly a mile in length, and paved throughout; the ruins of a temple of the age of Trajan; the remains of a very large church, within whose crumbling walls is the modern Christian burying-ground; a mosque, the roof of which was once supported on marble columns, doubtless rifled from an old church, or a still older temple. Then we inspected the ruins of a fountain, of an opera, and of a large theatre; and we saw two immense reservoirs, anciently supplied by aqueducts which brought water from the neighbouring mountains.

Verily the destroyer has been long at work in this old city! Here are ruins heaped upon the top of ruins; temples transformed into churches; churches again transformed into mosques, and mosques now dreary and desolate. Inscriptions were here, side by side, recording each transformation, and showing how the same building was dedicated first to Jove, then to St. George, and finally to Mohammed. We walked on after our little guide, winding among vast heaps of ruins—ruins, nothing but ruins, and desolation, and rent walls, and fallen columns. The modern dwellings are just the lower stories of the ancient houses, which have been cleared out and occupied; and the whole site has become so deeply covered with fallen structures, that the people seem, for the most part, to be residing in caves.

Thirty or forty boys, with a fair sprinkling of men, followed us, shouting and dancing in high glee at the strange figures of the Franks, the first, probably, that most of them had seen. We should have been seriously incommoded by their attentions, had it not been for the threats of our manly little guide, accompanied now and then by a volley of stones at the boys who ventured too near. As we passed the houses, too, and the cavern-like court-yards, portly women and coy girls peeped at us with one eye over the corners of

their long white veils, and laughingly pointed out to each other some wondrous oddity about our dress. Our hats—or *kettles*, as they persisted in calling them—attracted most attention. In fact, we created among the quiet people of Suweideh quite as great a sensation as a party of Arabs with their bronzed faces, flame-coloured turbans, and flowing robes would do in Cheapside or in the High Street of Edinburgh.

No city in Bashan—not even Bozrah, its Roman capital—surpasses Suweideh in the extent of its ruins; and yet, strange to say, its ancient name is unknown, and there is no mention of it in history previous to the Crusades. It seems to have suffered more from time and from the chances of war than any other city in the whole country. Inscriptions found on its monuments show that it was a flourishing city long before the conquest of Bashan by the Romans in A.D. 105, and that it carried on an extensive trade with Egypt and other countries down to the middle of the fourth century. William of Tyre, the historian of the Crusades, says of the region round the city: "It is rich in the choicest products of nature,—wine, corn, and oil; the climate is salubrious and the air pure." So late, therefore, as the twelfth century the country was prosperous and the city populous. We can see the evidence of this still. The hill-sides are everywhere terraced, and plain and mountain alike bear the marks of former careful cultivation. The terraces are admirably fitted for the growth of the vine, the fig, and the olive; and the rich plain even now bears crops of grain whose luxuriance is proverbial. Nowhere in Bashan, nowhere in all Syria, did I see such convincing evidences of the surpassing richness and vast resources of the soil, as around Suweideh. One would suppose that Moses had his eye upon it when he penned these words—words equally beautiful and true: "*The Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of the valleys and hills; a land of*

wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack anything in it" (Deut. viii. 7–9).

And one would suppose, too, looking at the Bible and looking at the land—comparing prophetic description with authentic history and present reality—that the prophets must surely have read the long and sad history of Palestine as I read it, and that they must surely have seen the present utter ruin and terrible desolation of this part of it as I saw it, and that they must surely have heard from the lips of the people the story of their oppression and their dangers as I heard it, before they could possibly have written such graphic words as these: "*I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation. I will bring the land into desolation; and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it*" (Lev. xxvi. 31, 32). "*The generation to come of your children that shall rise up after you, and the stranger that shall come from a far land, shall say, when they see the plagues of that land, and the sicknesses which the Lord hath laid upon it, Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this land? what meaneth the heat of this great anger?*" (Deut. xxix. 22, 24).

These are only a few, a very few, of multitudes of similar predictions. And, let it be observed, the predictions are not made in mere general terms, capable of a wide rendering and a somewhat vague reference. They are special, graphic, and detailed; and their fulfilment is evident as it is complete. The fields are waste, the roads deserted, the cities abandoned, the houses without inhabitants, the sanctuaries desecrated, the vineyards, orchards, and groves destroyed. And the land is desolated by the "*violence*" and the folly "*of all them that dwelt therein*,"—of the Turks, its nominal owners, and of the Arabs, its periodical "*spoilers*," who come up "*upon all high places through the wilderness.*" "*Every one that passeth by it is astonished*" at its deserted

cities and waste fields; and "*the stranger that comes from a far country*,"—the thoughtful student of history, the thoughtful observer, the thoughtful reader of his Bible,—cannot refrain from exclaiming, as he rides through Bashan, "*Wherefore hath the Lord done this unto this land?*"

The noble Druse chief of Suweideh, Sheikh Wâked el-Hamdân, was absent on our arrival, but in the evening he returned, and entertained us with a hospitality that would have done honor to the patriarch Job, who is represented, by a local tradition, as having been the first prince of Suweideh. When the evening banquet was over, the whole elders of the town crowded into the large reception room of Sheikh Wâked, and squatted in concentric circles round the blazing fire. We occupied the seat of honour, on a raised dais, beside the sheikh. Rings of white turbans, the distinguishing head-dress of the Druses, appeared round and round us, here and there broken by the crimson kefiyeh of a Bedawy, or the black kerchief of a Christian. An Egyptian sat by the fire preparing and distributing coffee, while an Abyssinian slave behind him pounded the fragrant berries in a huge oak mortar, beating time with the pestle, which bore some resemblance, in form and size, to an Indian war-club. Each guest, on drinking, rose to his knee, touched forehead and lips with his right hand, and bowed to the sheikh; then, on sitting down again, he made another similar salâm, intended for the rest of the company, and those near him returned it, with a muttered prayer that the refreshment might do him good. It was an interesting scene, and was probably not unlike the receptions of guests in the mansion of Job and in the tents of Abraham.

We talked of politics, of war, and of poetry; and most of the company took part in the conversation with a respectful propriety and a good sense that surprised me. The poetry of the Arabs has some striking peculiarities. Their poets often describe the virtues and achievements of distinguished men in short stanzas, containing two or four mea-

sures; and the beauty of the rhythm and boldness of the imagery are sometimes of a high order. There is a species of composition which they often try, and in which many are adepts. It is difficult for those who are ignorant of the peculiar structure of the Arabic language to understand its nature. A word is taken, and, by changing its form, a series of distinct acts is described, each act being expressed by a different inflexion of the root. One word will thus occur six, eight, or ten times in a stanza, with the addition of a prefix or suffix, or the insertion of an intermediate letter, or an alteration in a vowel point; and each change conveys a new and definite meaning. The warlike achievements of a favorite leader are not unfrequently graphically described in this manner by skilful and varied inflexions of his own name. The Hebrew scholar will find something analogous to this in Jacob's play upon the word *Gilead*, in Genesis xxxi. 46–48; but the best examples of the kind in Scripture are given in Hosea, chapters i. and ii., on the word *Jezreel.*

The morning we left Suweideh dawned gloomy and threatening. A heavy thunder-storm had passed over the place during the night. Never before in Syria had I seen rain heavier or lightning more vivid. For an hour or more the flashes seemed to form one continuous stream, lighting up the ruins of the city, and the glens and rocks of the neighbouring mountains with an intense though lurid blaze. In the morning, dark, lowering clouds still swept along the surface of the ground, and enveloped the whole mountains. The air was cold, and the smart showers which fell at intervals made it feel still colder; but as the wind was high, and veering round to the north, we knew the day would be fine; for the Scripture statement still holds good in Scripture lands,—"Fair weather cometh out of the north" (Job xxxvii. 22).

A few minutes' ride down the rocky slope of the ridge on which Suweideh stands brought us into the plain of Bashan, properly so called. I had heard much of its richness. I

had heard of the wonderful productiveness of that deep, black, loamy soil, of the luxuriance of its grass, and of its teeming crops of grain; but up to the moment I first set foot on it, I thought—indeed I was fully persuaded—that a large amount of exaggeration must run through all those glowing descriptions. Now I saw that there had been no exaggeration, and that no part of Palestine could be compared in fertility to the plain of Bashan. No wonder the pastoral tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh made choice of this noble country, preferring its wooded hills and grassy plains to the comparatively bleak and bare range west of the Jordan, visible from the heights of Moab. The plain extended in one unbroken expanse, flat as the surface of a lake, for fifty miles, to the base of Hermon. Little hills—some conical, some cup-shaped — rise at intervals like islands, and over their surface, and sometimes round their bases, are scattered fragments of porous lava, intermixed with basalt of a firmer texture; but the rest of the soil is entirely free from stones. On or beside these tells many of the ancient towns stand; and their black walls, houses, and towers, shattered by time and the horrors of war, often look in the distance like natural cliffs.

The Roman road which anciently connected Damascus and Bostra, passing close to some of the chief cities of Bashan, lay a few hundred yards to the right of our path. Its line can still be traced,—indeed the old pavement is in many places quite perfect, as much so as any part of the Appian way; and yet, in a ride of some twenty miles this day along that route, we did not meet, we did not see, a single human being. The "way-faring man" *has* "ceased" here, and "the highways *are* desolate." Before reaching the town of Ary, about eight miles from Suweideh, we passed two villages, and we saw four others a little way up the mountain-side, on the left,—all of which contain a few families of Druses; while away on the plain, to the right, no less than five towns were in view in one moment, *entirely deserted.*

The words of Jeremiah are surely fulfilled: "*I beheld, and lo, there was no man. . . . . I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord, and by his fierce anger*" (iv. 25, 26).

The town of Ary stands on a rocky tell. It is about a mile in circuit; but there are no buildings of any importance; nor are there any traces of wealth or architectural beauty. It appears to have been a plain country town, which became the seat of a bishopric about the fourth century, as we learn from the old ecclesiastical records.

We had ascended the hill-side, and were quietly occupied in examining the ruins of what seemed to have been a church, when a party of the inhabitants came up, headed by their sheikh, and invited us to accept of their hospitality. They would take no excuse. It would be a disgrace to their village if *they* would permit us to pass; it would be an insult to their chief if *we* should attempt it. They entreated as Abraham would have done at his tent-door, or Lot at the gate of Sodom. We entered the sheikh's house; and while coffee was being prepared, the whole household—in fact a great part of the town—got into a state of commotion. A woman came into the apartment with a large copper vessel in her hand, —took "a measure" of flour out of a huge earthen jar in the corner, poured on water, and commenced the process of "*kneading unleavened cakes.*" A moment afterwards we heard a confused noise of cackling and screaming; then a flock of hens flew in terror past the open door, followed by a troop of women and boys in full chase. We saw they had resolved to make us "a feast." The flocks were at a distance, and it would take hours to obtain a lamb or a kid,—fowls must therefore serve as a substitute. We were fully aware of the despatch of Arab cooks, and that in this respect they were not surpassed even by the patriarchal; but our time was too precious to be wasted in mere ceremony, however interesting. Firmly,

but respectfully, we assured our worthy host that we must proceed at once to Bozrah. To the evident regret of the stately sheikh, and the unbounded astonishment of crowds of his people, who gathered round us, and who *could not* understand how it was possible for any polite or respectable person to decline proffered hospitality, we mounted our horses and rode off.

Our route lay near the base of the mountains of Bashan, which rose up in dark frowning masses on our left, most of their conical peaks wooded to the summit. Kuleib, the highest of the whole range, was in full view, its top covered with snow. Low spurs here shot far out into the plain, having between them rich vales covered with luxuriant pastures. Through the midst of each vale, between high alluvial banks, now flowed a tiny winter stream. Passing the villages of Mujeimir and Wetr, we gained the crest of a ridge commanding a noble view over the plain southward. We drew bridle for a few minutes, to examine more minutely this magnificent panorama. On the west, south, and south-east, the plain was unbounded. Every section of it to which we turned our eyes was thickly dotted with large towns and villages; yet, with the exception of a few spots near us, there was no cultivation, and we did not see a single tree or bush on that vast expanse. Mahmood pointed out the more important cities. Due southward, some five miles distant, a broad black belt extended far across the green plain; in the midst of it rose the massive towers and battlements of a great castle; while other towers and tapering minarets shot up here and there. That was *Bozrah*, the ancient stronghold of Bashan, the capital of the Roman province, and the first city in Syria captured by the Saracens. We saw Jemurrin, Keires, Burd, Ghusam, and a host of others on the right and left—all *deserted*. Low in a valley, on the sout-east, lay the wide-spread ruins and ancient colossal houses of *Kerioth*, one of the old cities of the plain of Moab (Jer. xlviii. 24); while away beyond it, on the hor-

izon, rose a graceful conical hill, crowned with the castle of *Salcah*, which Joshua mentions as the eastern limit of Bashan, and of the kingdom of the giant Og (Josh. xiii. 11, 12).

This southern section of Bashan is richer in historic and sacred associations than the northern. I looked at it now spread out before me with feelings such as I cannot describe. Those large deserted cities, that noble but desolate plain,—the whole history of the country for four thousand years, from the Rephaim down to the Osmanlis, is written there. The massive dwellings show the simple style and ponderous workmanship of *Giant* architects. *Jewish* masonry and names; *Greek* inscriptions and temples; *Roman* roads; *Christian* churches; *Saracenic* mosques; *Turkish* desolations;—all, all are there; and all alike are illustrations of the accuracy and confirmations of the truth of the Bible.

IV.

BOZRAH.

"And judgment is come . . . . . upon Bozrah."—Jer. xlviii. 24.

I spent three days at Bozrah. There is much to be seen there,—much of Scriptural, and still more of historical and antiquarian interest; and I tried to see it all. Bozrah was a strong city, as its name implies—*Bozrah*, "fortress,"—and a magnificent city; and numerous vestiges of its ancient strength and magnificence remain to this day. Its ruins are nearly five miles in circuit; its walls are lofty and massive; and its castle is one of the largest and strongest fortresses in Syria. Among the ruins I saw two theatres, six temples, and ten or twelve churches and mosques; besides palaces, baths, fountains, aqueducts, triumphal arches, and other structures almost without number. The old Bozrites must have been men of great taste and enterprise as well as

wealth. Some of the buildings I saw there would grace the proudest capital of modern Europe.

It is a work of no little toil to explore Bozrah. The streets are mostly covered, and in some places completely blocked up, with fallen buildings and heaps of rubbish. Over these I had to climb, risking my limbs among loose stones. The principal structures, too, are so much encumbered with broken columns and the piled-up ruins of roofs and pediments, that one has great difficulty in getting at them, and discovering their points of interest or beauty. In trying to copy a Greek inscription over the door of a church, I clambered to the top of a wall. My weight caused it to topple over, and it fell with a terrible crash. It was only by a sudden and hazardous leap I escaped, and barely escaped, being buried beneath it. And we were hourly exposed to danger of another and still more pressing kind. Bozrah had once a population of a hundred thousand souls and more; when I was there its whole inhabitants comprised just *twenty families!* These lived huddled together in the lower stories of some very ancient houses near the castle. The rest of the city is completely desolate. The fountains near the city, and the rich pastures which encircle them, attract wandering Bedawîn,—outcasts from the larger tribes, and notorious thieves and brigands. These come up from the desert with a few goats, sheep, and donkeys, and perhaps a horse; and they lurk, gipsy-like, about the fountains and among the ruins of the large outlying towns of Bashan, watching every opportunity to plunder an unguarded caravan or *strip* (Luke x. 30) an unwary traveller, or steal a stray camel. The whole environs of Bozrah are infested with them, owing to the extent of the ruins and the numbers of wells and springs in and around them. Our arrival, numbers, and equipments had been carefully noted; and armed men lay in wait, as we soon discovered, at various places, in the hope of entrapping and plundering some straggler. Once, indeed, a bold attempt was made by their com-

bined forces to carry off our whole party. We had fortunately taken the precaution on our arrival to engage the brother of the sheikh as guide and guard during our stay; and to this arrangement, joined to the fear of the Druse escort, we owed our safety. So true has time made the words of Jeremiah: "*The spoilers are come upon all high places through the wilderness....no flesh shall have peace*" (Jer. xii. 12). The words of Ezekiel, too, are strikingly applicable to the present state of Bozrah: "*Thus saith the Lord God of the land of Israel; They shall eat their bread with carefulness, and drink their water with astonishment, that their land may be desolate from all that is therein, because of the violence of all them that dwell therein. And the cities that are inhabited shall be laid waste, and the land shall be desolate*" (Ezek. xii. 19, 20).

The sheikh of Bozrah told me that his flocks would not be safe even in his own court-yard at night, and that armed sentinels had to patrol continually round their little fields at harvest-time. "If it were not for the castle," he said, "which has high walls, and a strong iron gate, we should be forced to leave Busrah altogether. We could not stay here a week. The Bedawîn swarm round the ruins. They steal everything they can lay hold of,—goat, sheep, cow, horse, or camel; and before we can get on their track they are far away in the desert."

Two or three incidents came under my own notice which proved the truth of the sheikh's sad statement. One day when examining the ruins of a large mosque, the head of a Bedawy appeared over an adjoining wall, looking at us. The sheikh, who was by my side, cried out, on seeing him, "Dog, you stole my sheep!" and seizing a stone he hurled it at him with such force and precision as must have brained him had he not ducked behind the wall. The sheikh and his companions gave chase, but the fellow escaped. One cannot but compare such scenes, scenes of ordinary life, of everyday occurrence in Bashan, with the language of pro-

phecy: "*I will give it* (the land of Israel) *into the hands of strangers for a prey, and to the wicked of the earth for a spoil;.....robbers shall enter into it and defile it.....The land is full of bloody crimes, and the city is full of violence*" (Ezek. vii. 2, 21–23).

Bozrah was one of the strongest cities of Bashan; it was, indeed, the most celebrated fortress east of the Jordan, during the Roman rule in Syria. Some parts of its wall are still almost perfect, a massive rampart of solid masonry, fifteen feet thick and nearly thirty high, with great square towers at intervals. The walled city was almost a rectangle, about a mile and a quarter long by a mile broad; and outside this were large straggling suburbs. A straight street intersects the city lengthwise, and has a beautiful gate at each end; and other straight streets run across it. Roman Bozrah (or *Bostra*) was a beautiful city, with long straight avenues and spacious thoroughfares; but the Saracens built their miserable little shops and quaint irregular houses along the sides of the streets, out and in, here and there, as fancy or funds directed; and they thus converted the stately Roman capital, as they did Damascus and Antioch, into a labyrinth of narrow, crooked, gloomy lanes. One sees the splendid Roman palace, and gorgeous Greek temple, and shapeless Arab *dukkân*, side by side, alike in ruins, just as if the words of Isaiah had been written with special reference to this city of Moab: "*He shall bring down their pride together with the spoil of their hands. And the fortress of the high fort of thy walls shall He bring down, lay low, and bring to the ground, even to the dust*" (Isa. xxv. 11, 12).

It might perhaps be as trying to my reader's patience as it was to my limbs, were I to retrace with him all my wanderings among the ruins of Bozrah; relating every little incident and adventure; and describing the wonders of art and architecture, and the curiosities of votive tablet, and dedicatory inscription on altar, tomb, church, and temple,

which I examined and deciphered during these three days. Still I think many will wish to hear a few particulars about an old Bible city, and a city of so much historical importance in the latter days of Bashan's glory. To me and to my companions it was intensely interesting to note the changes that old city has undergone. They are shown in the strata of its ruins just as geological periods are shown in the strata of the earth's crust. Some of them are recorded, too, on monumental tablets, containing the legends of other centuries. In one spot, deep down beneath the accumulated remains of more recent buildings, I saw the simple, massive, primitive dwellings of the aborigines, with their stone doors and stone roofs. These were built and inhabited by the gigantic *Emim* and *Rephaim* long before the Chaldean shepherd migrated from Ur to Canaan (Gen. xiv. 5). High above them rose the classic portico of a Roman temple, shattered and tottering, but still grand in its ruins. Passing between the columns, I saw over its beautifully sculptured doorway a Greek inscription, telling how, in the fourth century, the temple became a church, and was dedicated to St. John. On entering the building, the record of still another change appeared on the cracked plaster of the walls. Upon it was traced in huge Arabic characters the well-known motto of Islamism:—"*There is no God but God, and Mohammed is the prophet of God.*"

One of the first buildings I visited was the castle, and on my way to it I passed a triumphal arch, erected, as a Latin inscription tells us, in honour of Julius, prefect of the first Parthian Philippine legion. It was most likely built during the reign of the emperor Philip, who was a native of Bozrah. The castle stands on the south side of the city, without the walls; and forming a separate fortress, was fitted at once to defend and command the town. It is of great size and strength, and the outer walls, towers, gate, and moat are nearly perfect; but the interior is ruinous. On the basement are immense vaulted tanks, stores, and gal-

leries; and over them were chambers sufficient to accommodate a small army. In the very centre of the structure, supported on massive piers and arches, are the remains of a theatre. This splendid monument of the luxury and magnificence of former days was so designed that the spectators commanded a view of the city and the whole plain beyond it to the base of Hermon. The building is a semicircle, 270 feet in diameter, and open above, like all Roman theatres. It was no doubt intended for the amusement of the Roman garrison, when Bostra was the capital of a province and the headquarters of a legion.*

The *keep* is a huge square tower, rising high above the battlements, and overlooking the plains of Bashan and Moab. From it I saw that Bozrah was in ancient times connected by a series of great highways with the leading cities and districts in Bashan and Arabia. They diverge from the city in straight lines; and my eye followed one after another till it disappeared in the far distance. One ran westward to the town of Ghusam, and then to Edrei; another northward to Suweideh and Damascus; another north-west, up among the mountains of Bashan; another to Kerioth; and another eastward, straight as an arrow, to the castle of Salcah, which crowned a conical hill on the horizon. Towns and villages appeared in every direction, thickly dotting the vast plain; a few of those to the north are inhabited, but all those southward have been deserted for centuries. I examined them long and carefully with my telescope, and their walls and houses appeared to be in even better preservation than those I had already visited. This has since been found to be the case, for my friend Mr. Cyril

* This opinion has been questioned by M. Rey, an accomplished French *savant*, who in the year 1858 retraced my footsteps through Bashan, and reviewed my "*Five Years in Damascus*" as he went along. I had the pleasure of meeting M. Rey on several occasions, and was impressed alike with his gentlemanly deportment and accomplished scholarship; but being an intimate friend of M. De Saulcy, whose pretended discoveries in and around Damascus I had criticized perhaps a little too severely, I am not surprised that he should make an occasional attempt at retaliation.

Graham visited them, penetrating this wild and dangerous country as far as Um el Jemâl, the Beth-gamul of Scripture which I saw from Bozrah, and to which I called his special attention. Beth-gamul is unquestionably one of the most remarkable places east of the Jordan. It is as large as Bozrah. It is surrounded by high walls, and contains many massive houses built of huge blocks of basalt; their roofs and doors, and even the gates of the city, being formed of the same material. Though deserted for many centuries, the houses, streets, walls, and gates are in as perfect preservation as if the city had been inhabited until within the last few years. It is curious to note the change that has taken place in the name. What the Hebrews called "*The house* of the camel," the Arabs now call "*The mother* of the camel."

I cannot tell how deeply I was impressed when looking out over that noble plain, rivalling in richness of soil the best of England's counties, thickly studded with cities, towns, and villages, intersected with roads, having one of the finest climates in the world; and yet utterly deserted, literally "*without man, without inhabitant, and without beast*" (Isa. xxxiii. 10). I cannot tell with what mingled feelings of sorrow and of joy, of mourning and of thanksgiving, of fear and of faith, I reflected on the history of that land; and taking out my Bible compared its existing state, as seen with my own eyes, with the numerous predictions regarding it written by the Hebrew prophets. In their day it was populous and prosperous; the fields waved with corn; the hill-sides were covered with flocks and herds; the highways were thronged with wayfarers; the cities resounded with the continuous din of a busy population. And yet they wrote as if they had seen the land as I saw it from the ramparts of Bozrah. The Spirit of the omniscient God alone could have guided the hand that penned such predictions as these: "Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, *Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly deso-*

late, and the Lord hath removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land" (Isa. vi. 11, 12). "*The destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way; he is gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate; and thy cities shall be laid waste without an inhabitant*" (Jer. iv. 7).

In former times a garrison was maintained in the castle of Bozrah by the Pasha of Damascus, for the purpose of defending the southern sections of Bashan from the periodical incursions of the Bedawîn. It has been withdrawn for many years. The "Destroyer of the Gentiles" can now come up unrestrained, "the spoilers" can now "come upon all high places through the wilderness," the sword now "devours from the one end of the land even to the other end of the land" (Jer. xii. 12); the cities *are* "without inhabitant," the houses *are* "without man," the land *is* "utterly desolate," judgment *has* come upon it all far and near; in a word, THE WHOLE OF BASHAN AND MOAB IS ONE GREAT FULFILLED PROPHECY.

We were conducted by our intelligent guide to a large church, apparently the ancient cathedral of Bozrah. It is built in the form of a Greek cross, and on the walls of the chancel are some remains of rude frescoes, representing saints and angels. Over the door is an inscription stating that the church was founded "by Julianus, archbishop of Bostra, in the year A.D. 513, in honour of the blessed martyrs Sergius, Bacchus, and Leontius." Our guide called the building "the church of the monk Bohira;" and a very old tradition represents this monk as playing an important part in the early history of Mohammedanism. It is said he was a native of this city, and that, being expelled from his convent, he joined the Arabian prophet, and aided in writing the Koran, supplying all those stories from the Bible, the Talmud, and the spurious Gospels, which make up so large a part of that remarkable book.

Not far from the church is the principal mosque, built, it

is said, by the Khalif Omar. The roof was supported on colonnades, like the early basilicas; and seventeen of the columns are monoliths of white marble, of great beauty. Two of them have inscriptions showing that they formerly belonged to some church, but probably they were originally intended to ornament a Greek temple.

We extended our walk one day to the suburbs on the north and west, where there are remains of some large and splendid buildings. We then proceeded to the west gate, at the end of the main street. The ancient pavement of the street, and of the road which runs across the plain to Ghusam, is quite perfect,—not a stone out of place. The gate has a single but spacious Roman arch, ornamented with pilasters and niches. Outside is a guard-house of the same style and period. Sitting down on the broken wall of this little building, I gazed long on the ruins of the city, and on the vast deserted plain. My companions had taken shelter from a shower in a vacant niche; and now there was not a human being, there was not a sign of life, within the range of vision. The open gate revealed heaps of rubbish and piles of stones, and shattered walls. In the distance a solitary column stood here and there, and the triumphal arch which rose over all around it, appeared as if built to celebrate the triumph of Desolation. The desolation of the plain without was as complete as that of the city within. Never before had I seen such a picture of utter, terrible desolation, except at Palmyra; and even there it was not so remarkable. That "city of the desert" might rise and flourish for a season, while the tide of commerce was rolling past it, and while it stood a solitary oasis on the desert highway uniting the eastern and western worlds; but on the opening up of some other channel of communication, it might naturally decline and fall. Bozrah is altogether different. It was situated in the midst of a fertile plain, in the centre of a populous province. It had abundant resources, fountains of water, an impregnable



MOSQUE OF OMAR

Bozrah



fortress. Why should Bozrah become desolate? Who would have ventured to predict its ruin? It surely was no city to grow up in a day and fade in a night! It surely did not depend for prosperity on the changeable channel of commerce! Something above and beyond mere natural causes and influences must have operated here. We can only understand its strange history when we read it in the light of prophecy. Then we can see the impress of a mightier than human hand. We can see that the curse of an angry God for the sin of a rebellious people has fallen upon Bozrah, "*and upon all the cities of the land of Moab far and near*" (Jer. xlviii. 24).

Two Bozrahs are mentioned in the Bible. One was in Edom, and is referred to in the well-known passage, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from *Bozrah?*" (Isa. lxiii. 1). Upon this ancient city judgments are pronounced in connection with Edom and Teman, whose inhabitants dwelt "in the clefts of the rocks," and the "heights of the hills," and made their houses "like the nests of the eagles" (Jer. xlix. 7–22). When pronouncing judgment upon Moab, the same prophet says, "Judgment is come upon the *plain country*," and he names the cities which stood in the plain, and among them are Beth-gamul, Kerioth, and *Bozrah* (Jer. xlviii. 21–24). Evidently these predictions cannot refer to the same place. Another fact still more conclusively establishes the point. After completing the sentence of Moab, including one Bozrah, the Spirit of God adds, "Yet will I bring again the captivity of Moab in the latter days" (Jer. xlviii. 47); whereas in Edom's doom we have these terrible words, "For I have sworn by myself, saith the Lord, that Bozrah shall become a desolation, a reproach, a waste, and a curse; and all the cities thereof shall be *perpetual wastes*" (Jer. xlix. 13).*

* Modern research in this, as in many other cases, has confirmed the accuracy of Biblical topography. The Bozrah of Edom has been identified with the village of Buseireh, among the mountains north of Petra; and here, in the plain, we have the Bozrah of

The plain of Moab embraced a large part of the plateau east of the Dead Sea and the Jordan. A short time before the exodus the Amorites conquered the northern part of that plain; and from them it was taken by the tribes of Reuben and Gad. It is doubtful whether the Moabites were ever completely expelled. They probably retired for a time to the desert, and when Israel's power declined, returned to their old possessions. The predictions of Jeremiah refer to cities once held by the Israelites, yet in his days belonging to Moab; hence he includes Bozrah in the land of Moab. Subsequently, Bozrah became the capital of a large Roman province; then the metropolitan city of Eastern Palestine, when its primate had thirty-three bishops under him; then it was captured by the Mohammedans, and gradually fell to ruin. Now we can see that the prophet's words are fulfilled, "*Judgment has come upon Bozrah.*"

DESERTED CITIES.

We had not gone more than four miles from Bozrah when an alarm was raised. The people of Bozrah had told us, and we had known ourselves, that though the country on our proposed route is thickly studded with towns and villages, yet not a single human being dwells in them. When approaching the village of Burd we saw figures moving about. At first we thought some shepherds had taken refuge there with their flocks; but it very soon became apparent that the figures were not shepherds. Considerable numbers collected on the flat house-tops, and we could see horses led out and held beneath the walls. They evidently saw us, and were preparing for an attack. We held a council

Moab. I was somewhat surprised recently to find that the writer of the article BOZRAH, in "Fairbairn's Dictionary of the Bible," charges me with holding the opinion of Kitto and others, that Bozrah of Edom, Bozrah of Moab, and modern Busrah, are identical. I never held such an opinion. I have always affirmed, that Bozrah of Edom and Bozrah of Moab were distinct cities; and had the writer of the article mentioned turned to my "Five Years in Damascus," vol. ii. p. 160, or to my "Handbook," or to the article BOZRAH in the last edition of "Kitto's Cyclopedia," he would have seen this.

of war, and resolved unanimously to go forward, and if attacked to meet the enemy boldly. Mahmood, after examining his gun and pistols, and loosening his sword in its scabbard, galloped off to reconnoitre. A horseman came out to meet him. I confess it was rather an anxious moment, but it did not last long. A few words were spoken, and Mahmood came back with the welcome intelligence that a little colony of Druses had migrated to the village two days previously. They were as much alarmed at us as we were at them. So it is always now in this unfortunate land, where the Ishmaelite roams free—"His hand against every man and every man's hand against him." Every stranger is looked upon as an enemy until he is proved to be a friend. The time and events so graphically depicted by Jeremiah have come: "*O inhabitant of Aroer, stand by the way and espy: ask him that fleeth, and her that escapeth, and say, What is done?*" (Jer. xlviii. 19.)

We rode on along the Roman road, stopping occasionally to examine with our glasses the deserted towns away to the right and left, and once or twice galloping to those near the road, so as to inspect their strange massive houses, standing complete, but tenantless. Often and often did our eyes sweep the open plain, and scan suspicious ruins, and peer into valleys, in the fear or hope of discovering roving Ishmaelites. We were almost disappointed that none appeared.

Soon after leaving Burd, we entered a rocky district; and here, among the rocks, we found some fields where a few Druses were ploughing, each man having his gun slung over his shoulders, and pistols in his belt. This is surely cultivation under difficulties. From this place until we reached Salcah, we did not see a living creature, except a flock of partridges and a herd of gazelles. The desert of Arabia is not more desolate than this rich and once populous plain of Moab.

SALCAH.

Joshua tells us that the kingdom of Og the giant included "*all Bashan unto Salcah*" (Josh. xiii. 11, 12); and the Israelites took and occupied the whole region from Mount Hermon "unto Salcah." Salcah, the eastern frontier city of Bashan, was now before me; its great old castle perched on the top of a conical hill, overlooking a boundless plain, and the city itself spread along its sloping sides, and reaching out into the valley below. I felt glad and thankful that I was privileged to reach the utmost eastern border of Palestine. I had previously explored its northern border away on the plain of Hamath and on the heights of Lebanon, and its western border from Tripoli to Joppa; and since that time I have traversed the southern border from Gaza eastward.

Salcah is one of the most remarkable cities in Palestine. It has been long deserted; and yet, as nearly as I could estimate, *five hundred* of its houses are still standing, and from three to four hundred families might settle in it at any moment without laying a stone, or expending an hour's labour on repairs. The circumference of the town and castle together is about three miles. Besides the castle, a number of square towers, like the belfries of churches, and a few mosques, appear to be the only public buildings.

On approaching Salcah, we rode through an old cemetery, and then, passing the ruins of an ancient gate, entered the streets of the deserted city. The open doors, the empty houses, the rank grass and weeds, the long straggling brambles in the door-ways and windows, formed a strange, impressive picture which can never leave my memory. Street after street we traversed, the tread of our horses awakening mournful echoes, and startling the foxes from their dens in the palaces of Salcah. Reaching an open paved area, in front of the principal mosque, we committed our horses to the keeping of Mahmood, who tied them up, unstrung his

gun, and sat down to act the part of sentry, while we explored the city.

The *castle* occupies the summit of a steep conical hill which rises to the height of some three hundred feet, and is the southern point of the mountain range of Bashan. Round the base of the hill is a deep moat, and another still deeper encircles the walls of the fortress. The building is a patchwork of various periods and nations. The foundations are Jewish, if not earlier; Roman rustic masonry appears above them; and over all is lighter Saracenic work, with beautifully interlaced inscriptions. The exterior walls are not much defaced, but the interior is one confused mass of ruins.

The view from the top is wide and wonderfully interesting. It embraces the whole southern slopes of the mountains, which, though rocky, are covered from bottom to top with artificial terraces, and fields divided by stone fences. From their base the plain of Bashan stretches out on the west to Hermon; the plain of Moab on the south, to the horizon; and the plain of Arabia on the east, beyond the range of vision. For more than an hour I sat gazing on that vast panorama. Wherever I turned my eyes towns and villages were seen. Bozrah was there on its plain, twelve miles distant. The towers of Beth-Gamul were faintly visible far away on the horizon. In the vale immediately to the south of Salcah are several deserted towns, whose names I could not ascertain. Three miles off, in the same direction, is a hill called Abd el-Maaz, with a large deserted town on its eastern side. To the south-east an ancient road runs straight across the plain as far as the eye can see. About six miles along it, on the top of a hill, is the deserted town of Maleh. On the section of the plain between south and east I counted *fourteen* towns, all of them, so far as I could see with my telescope, habitable like Salcah, but *entirely deserted!* From this one spot I saw *upwards of thirty* deserted towns! Well might I exclaim

with the prophet, as I sat on the ruins of this great fortress, and looked over that mournful scene of utter desolation, "*Moab is spoiled, and gone up out of her cities. . . . . Moab is confounded; for it is broken down: howl and cry; tell ye it in Arnon that Moab is spoiled, and judgment is come upon the plain country. . . . . Upon Kiriathaim, and upon Beth-gamul, and upon Beth-meon, and upon Kerioth, upon Bozrah, and upon all the cities of the land of Moab, far and near*" (Jer. xlviii. 15–24).

Another feature of the landscape impressed me still more deeply. Not only is the country—plain and hill-side alike—chequered with fenced fields, but groves of fig-trees are here and there seen, and terraced vineyards still clothe the sides of some of the hills. These are neglected and wild, but *not fruitless.* Mahmood told us that they produce great quantities of figs and grapes, which are rifled year after year by the Bedawîn in their periodical raids. How literal and how true have the words of Jeremiah become! "*O vine of Sibmah, I will weep for thee with the weeping of Jazer: . . . the spoiler is fallen upon thy summer fruits, and upon thy vintage. And joy and gladness is taken from the plentiful field, and from the land of Moab; and I have caused wine to fail from the wine-presses; none shall tread with shouting*" (Jer. xlviii. 32, 33). Nowhere on earth is there such a melancholy example of tyranny, rapacity, and misrule, as here. Fields, pastures, vineyards, houses, villages, cities—all alike deserted and waste. Even the few inhabitants that have hid themselves among the rocky fastnesses and mountain defiles drag out a miserable existence, oppressed by robbers of the desert on the one hand, and robbers of the government on the other. It would seem as if the people of Moab had heard the injunction of Jeremiah: "O ye that dwell in Moab, *leave the cities and dwell in the rock, and be like the dove that maketh her nest in the side of the hole's mouth.*" And even thus they cannot escape, for "He that fleeth shall fall into

the pit; and he that getteth up out of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for I will bring upon it, even upon Moab, the year of their visitation, saith the Lord" (Jer. xlviii. 28, 44).

V.

"Judgment is come upon all the cities of the land of Moab, far and near."

Salcah is situated on the south-eastern corner of Bashan. Standing on the lofty battlements of its castle, Moab and Arabia lay before me—the former on the right, the latter on the left, each a boundless plain reaching from the city walls to the horizon. Behind me rose in terraced slopes the mountains of Bashan, and over their southern declivities the eye took in a wide expanse of its plain. Everywhere on that vast panorama,—on plain and mountain side, in Bashan, Moab, and Arabia, far as the eye could see and the telescope command,—were towns and villages thickly scattered; and all deserted, though not ruined. Many people might have thought, and a few still believe, that there was a large amount of Eastern exaggeration in the language of Moses when describing the conquest of this country three thousand years ago: "We took all his cities at that time, ... *three-score cities*, all the region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan. *All these cities were fenced with high walls, gates, and bars; beside unwalled towns a great many*" (Deut. iii. 4, 5). No man who has traversed Bashan, or who has climbed the hill of Salcah, will ever again venture to bring such a charge against the sacred historian. The walled cities, with their ponderous gates of stone, are there now as they were when the Israelites invaded the land. The great numbers of unwalled towns are there too, standing testimonies to the truth and accuracy of Moses, and monumental protests against the poetical interpretations of modern rationalists. There are the roads once thronged by the teeming population; there are the fields they enclosed and cultivated;

there are the terraces they built up; there are the vineyards and orchards they planted; all alike desolate, not poetically or ideally, but literally "without man, and without inhabitant, and without beast."

My friend Mr. Cyril Graham, who followed so far in my track, and who was the first of European travellers to penetrate those plains beyond, which I have been trying to describe, bears his testimony to the literal fulfilment of prophecy. Some of his descriptions of what he saw are exceedingly interesting and graphic; and one is only sorry that they are so very brief. Of Beth-gamul he says: "On reaching this city, I left my Arabs at one particular spot, and wandered about quite alone in the old streets of the town, entered one by one the old houses, went up stairs, visited the rooms, and, in short, made a careful examination of the whole place; but so perfect was every street, every house, every room, that I almost fancied I was in a dream, wandering alone in this city of the dead, seeing all perfect, yet not hearing a sound. I don't wish to moralize too much, but one cannot help reflecting on a people once so great and so powerful, who, living in these houses of stone within their walled cities, must have thought themselves invincible; who had their palaces and their sculptures, and who, no doubt, claimed to be *the* great nation, as all Eastern nations have done; and that this people should have so passed away, that for so many centuries the country they inhabited has been reckoned as a desert, until some traveller from a distant land, curious to explore these regions, finds these old towns standing alone, and telling of a race long gone by, whose history is unknown, and whose very name is matter of dispute. Yet this very state of things is predicted by Jeremiah. Concerning this very country he says these very words,—'*For the cities thereof shall be desolate, without any to dwell therein*' (Jer. xlviii. 9); and the people (Moab) '*shall be destroyed from being a people*' (ver. 42). Here I think there can be no ambiguity. Visit these ancient cit-

ies, and turn to that ancient Book—no further comment is necessary."

No less than *eleven* of the old cities which I saw from Salcah, lying between Bozrah and Beth-gamul, were visited by Mr. Graham. Their ramparts, their houses, their streets, their gates and doors, are nearly all perfect; and yet they are "*desolate without man.*" This enterprising and daring traveller also made a long journey into the hitherto unexplored country east of the mountains of Bashan. There he found ancient cities, and roads, and vast numbers of inscriptions in unknown characters, but not a single inhabitant. The towns and villages east of the mountain range are all, without exception, deserted; the soil is uncultivated, and "the highways lie waste." In the whole of those vast plains, north and south, east and west, DESOLATION reigns supreme. The cities, the highways, the vineyards, the fields, are all alike silent as the grave, except during the periodical migrations of the Bedawîn, whose flocks, herds, and people eat, trample down, and waste all before them. The long predicted doom of Moab is now fulfilled: "*The spoiler shall come upon every city, and no city shall escape: the valley also shall perish, and the plain shall be destroyed, as the Lord hath spoken. Give wings unto Moab, that it may flee and get away; for the cities thereof shall be desolate, without any to dwell therein.*" . . . . But why should I transcribe more? Why should I continue to compare the predictions of the Bible with the state of the country? The harmony is complete. No traveller can possibly fail to see it; and no conscientious man can fail to acknowledge it. The best, the fullest, the most instructive commentary I ever saw on the forty-eighth chapter of Jeremiah, was that inscribed by the finger of God on the panorama spread out around me as I stood on the battlements of the castle of Salcah.

It was a sad and solemn scene,—a scene of utter and terrible desolation,—the result of sin and folly; and yet I

turned away from it with much reluctance. I would gladly have seen more of those old cities, and penetrated farther into that uninhabited plain. A tempting field lay there for the ecclesiastical antiquarian and the student of sacred history; but the time was not suitable for such a journey, and other duties summoned me away.*

Remounting our horses we rode along the silent streets and passed out of the deserted gates into the desolate country. After winding down the steep hill-side amid mounds of rubbish we halted in the centre of an ancient cemetery to take a last look of Salcah. The castle rose high over us on the crest of its conical hill, while the towers, walls, and terraced houses of the city extended in a serried line down the southern declivity to the plain, where they met the old gardens and vineyards. Everything seemed so complete, so habitable, so life-like, that once and again I looked and examined as the question rose in my mind, "*Can* this city be totally deserted?" Yes, it was so;—"without man, and without beast."

"Slumber is there, but not of rest:
Here her forlorn and weary nest
The famish'd hawk has found.
The wild dog howls at fall of night,
The serpent's rustling coils affright
The traveller on his round."

KERIOTH.

We turned westward to Kerioth, and soon fell into the line of the ancient road, its pavement in many places perfect, though here and there torn up and swept away by mountain torrents. On our right, about two miles distant, lay Ayûn, a deserted city as large as Salcah. Kuweiris, Ain, Muneiderah, and many others were visible,—some in

* Another traveller has of late traversed part of Bashan, and penetrated the desert eastward. I refer to Dr. J. G. Wetzstein, whom I had the pleasure of knowing as Prussian consul in Damascus. His little work, *Reisebericht über Hauran und die Trachonen*, Berlin, 1860, is interesting and instructive. It contains the fullest account hitherto published of that remarkable region, the *Safa*.

quiet green vales, some perched like fortresses on the sides and summits of rugged hills. The country through which our route lay was very rocky; but though now desolate, the signs of former industry are there. The loose stones have been gathered into great heaps, and little fields formed; and terraces can be traced along every hill-side from bottom to top.

In two hours we reached Kureiyeh, and received a cordial welcome from its warlike Druse chief, Ismail el-Atrash. The town is situated in a wide valley at the south-western base of the mountains of Bashan. The ruins are of great extent, covering a space at least as large as Salcah. The houses which remain have the same general appearance as those in other towns. No large public building now exists entire; but there are traces of many; and in the streets and lanes are numerous fragments of columns and other vestiges of ancient grandeur. I copied several Greek inscriptions bearing dates of the first and second centuries in our era.

Among the cities in the plain of Moab upon which judgment is pronounced by Jeremiah, Kerioth occurs in connection with Beth-gamul and Bozrah; and here, on the side of the plain, only five miles distant from Bozrah, stands *Kureiyeh*, manifestly an Arabic form of the Hebrew Kerioth. Kerioth was reckoned one of the strongholds of the plain of Moab (Jer. xlviii. 41). Standing in the midst of wide-spread rock-fields, the passes through which could be easily defended; and encircled by massive ramparts, the remains of which are still there,—I saw, and every traveller can see, how applicable is Jeremiah's reference, and how strong this city must once have been. I could not but remark, too, while wandering through the streets and lanes, that the private houses bear the marks of the most remote antiquity. The few towers and fragments of temples, which inscriptions show to have been erected in the first centuries of the Christian era, are modern in comparison with the colossal walls and massive stone doors of

the private houses. The simplicity of their style, their low roofs, the ponderous blocks of roughly hewn stone with which they are built, the great thickness of the walls, and the heavy slabs which form the ceilings,—all point to a period far earlier than the Roman age, and probably even antecedent to the conquest of the country by the Israelites. Moses makes special mention of the strong cities of Bashan, and speaks of their high walls and gates. He tells us, too, in the same connection, that Bashan was called *the land of the giants* (or Rephaim, Deut. iii. 13); leaving us to conclude that the cities were built by giants. Now the houses of Kerioth and other towns in Bashan appear to be just such dwellings as a race of giants would build. The walls, the roofs, but especially the ponderous gates, doors, and bars, are in every way characteristic of a period when architecture was in its infancy, when giants were masons, and when strength and security were the grand requisites. I measured a door in Kerioth: it was nine feet high, four and a half feet wide, and ten inches thick,—one solid slab of stone. I saw the folding gates of another town in the mountains still larger and heavier. Time produces little effect on such buildings as these. The heavy stone slabs of the roofs resting on the massive walls make the structure as firm as if built of solid masonry; and the black basalt used is almost as hard as iron. There can scarcely be a doubt, therefore, that these are the very cities erected and inhabited by the Rephaim, the aboriginal occupants of Bashan; and the language of Ritter appears to be true: "These buildings remain as eternal witnesses of the conquest of Bashan by Jehovah."

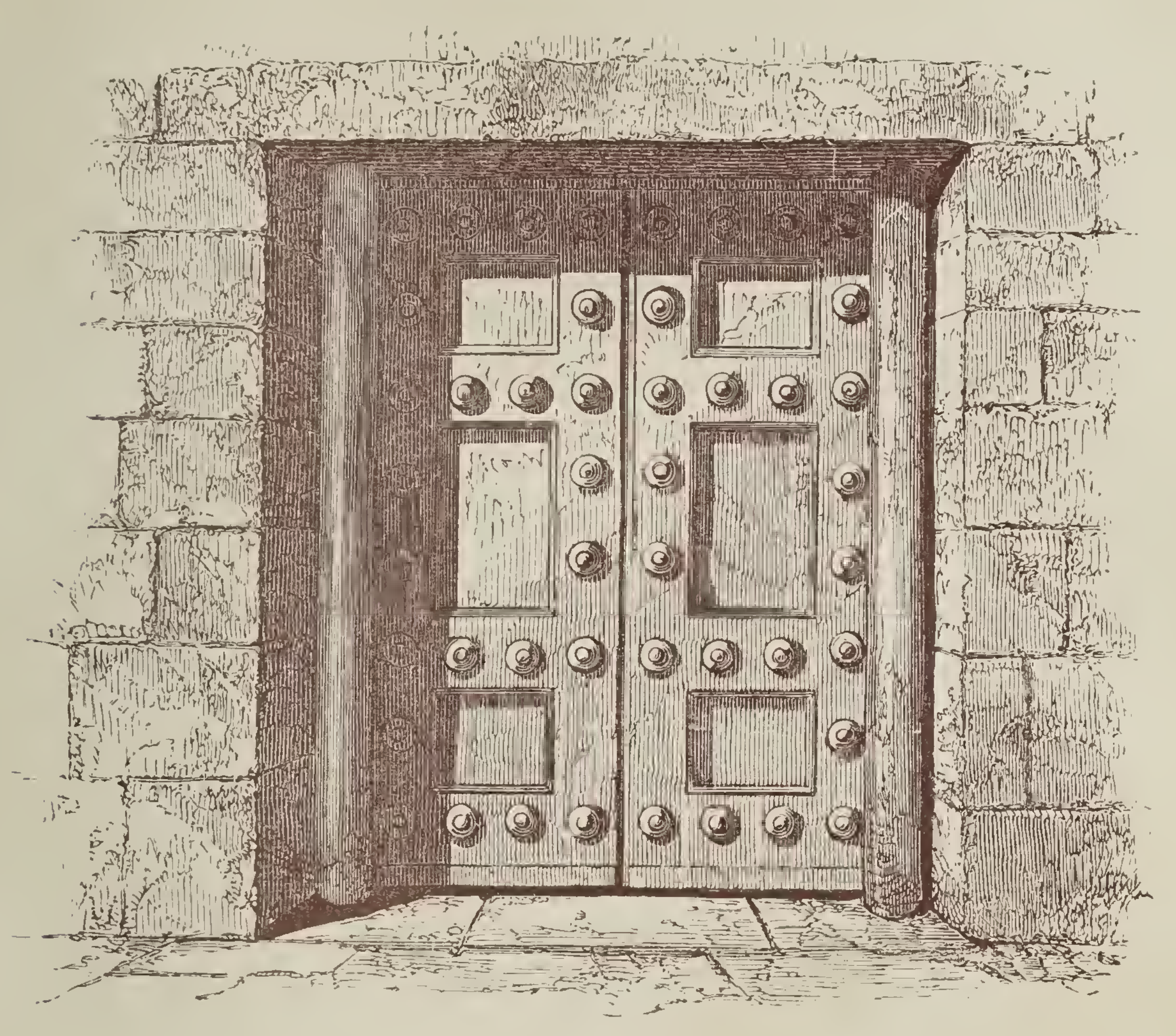
We have thus at Kerioth and its sister cities some of the most ancient houses of which the world can boast; and in looking at them and wandering among them, and passing night after night in them, my mind was led away back to the time, now nearly four thousand years ago, when the kings of the East warred with the Rephaim in Ashteroth-

Karnaim, and with the Emim *in the plain of Kiriathaim* (Gen. xiv. 5). Some of the houses in which I slept were most probably standing at the period of that invasion. How strange to occupy houses of which giants were the architects, and a race of giants the original owners! The temples and tombs of Upper Egypt are of great interest, as the works of one of the most enlightened nations of antiquity; the palaces of Nineveh are still more interesting, as the memorials of a great city which lay buried for two thousand years; but the massive houses of Kerioth scarcely yield in interest to either. They are antiquities of another kind. In size they cannot vie with the temples of Karnac; in splendour they do not approach the palaces of Khorsabad; yet they are the memorials of a race of giant warriors that has been extinct for more than three thousand years, and of which Og, king of Bashan, was one of the last representatives; and they are, I believe, the only specimens in the world of the ordinary private dwellings of remote antiquity. The monuments designed by the genius and reared by the wealth of imperial Rome are fast mouldering to ruin in this land; temples, palaces, tombs, fortresses, are all shattered, or prostrate in the dust; but the simple, massive houses of the Rephaim are in many cases perfect as if only completed yesterday.

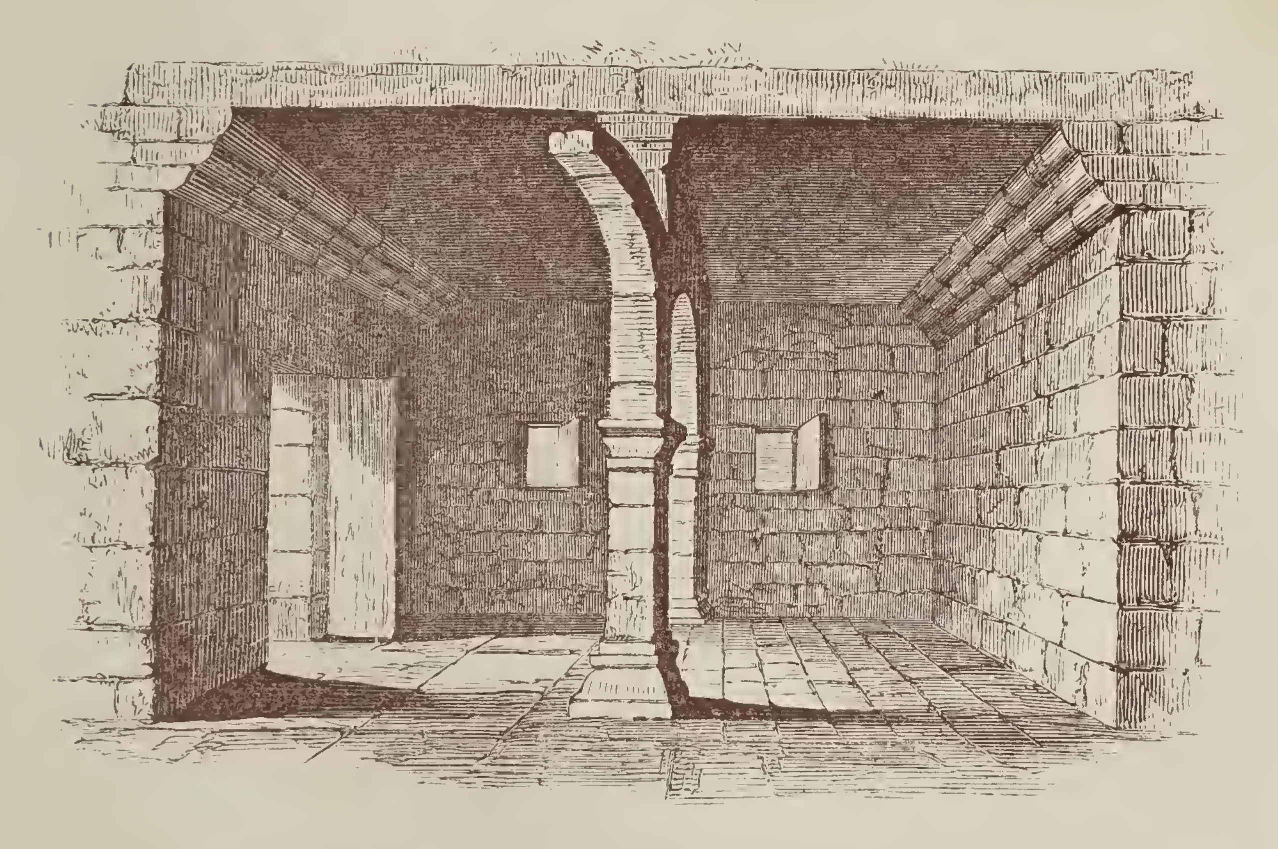
It is worthy of note here, as tending to prove the truth of my statements, and to illustrate the words of the sacred writers, that the towns of Bashan were considered ancient even in the days of the Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus, who says regarding this country: "Fortresses and strong castles have been erected by the *ancient inhabitants* among the retired mountains and forests. Here in the midst of *numerous towns*, are some great cities, such as Bostra and Gerasa, encompassed by massive walls." Mr. Graham, the only other traveller since Burckhardt, who traversed eastern Bashan, entirely agrees with me in my conclusions. "When we find," he writes, "one after an-

other, great stone cities, walled and unwalled, with stone gates, and so *crowded* together that it becomes almost a matter of wonder how all the people could have lived in so small a place; when we see houses built of such huge and massive stones that no force which can be brought against them in that country could ever batter them down; when we find rooms in these houses so large and lofty that many of them would be considered fine rooms in a palace in Europe; and, lastly, when we find some of these towns bearing the very names which cities in that very country bore before the Israelites came out of Egypt, I think we cannot help feeling the strongest conviction that we have before us the cities of the Rephaim of which we read in the Book of Deuteronomy."

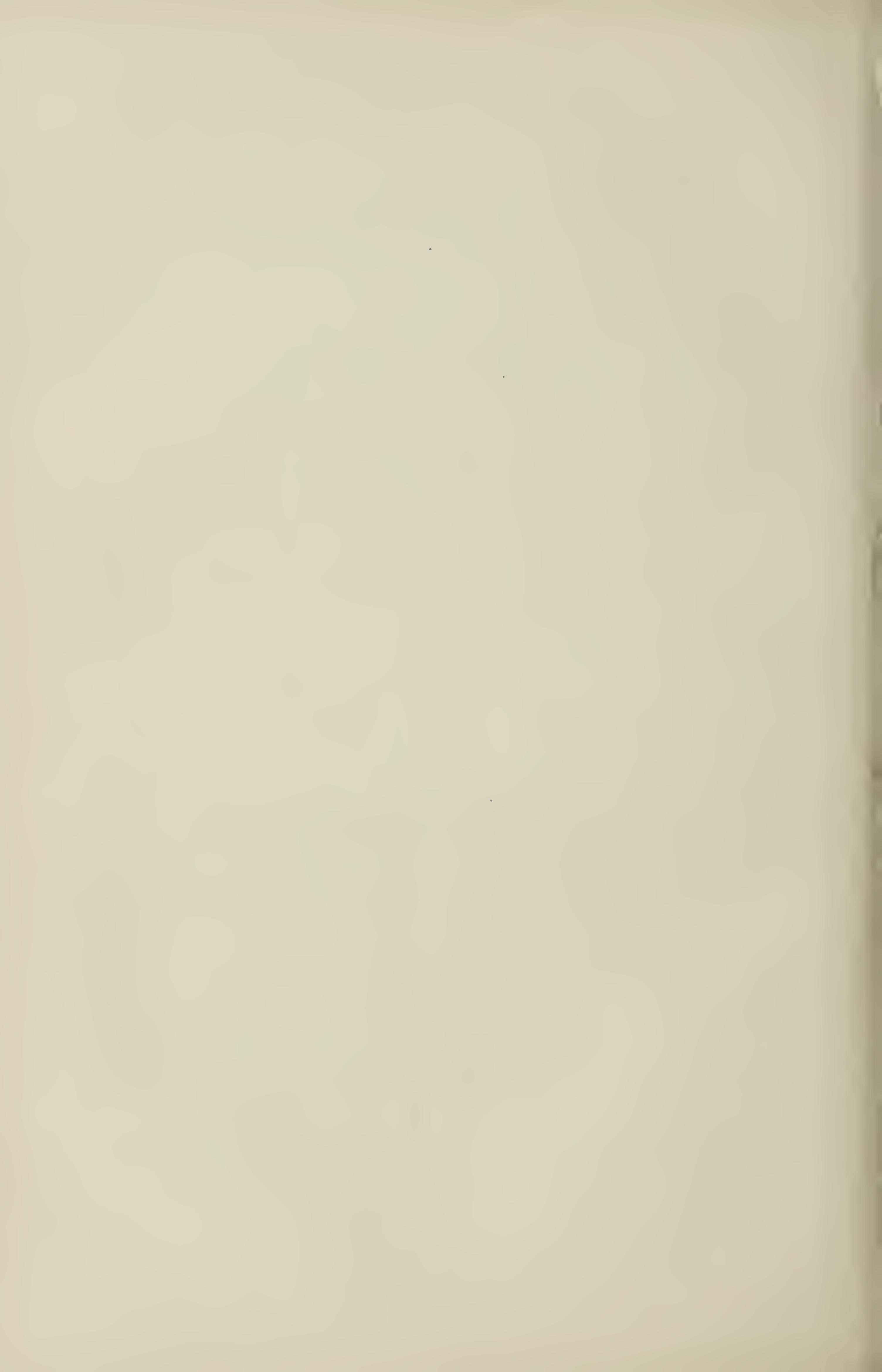
Kerioth is a frontier town. It is on the confines of the uninhabited plain, where the fierce Ishmaelite roams at will, "his hand against every man." The Druses of Kerioth are all armed, and they always carry their arms. With their goats on the hill-side, with their yokes of oxen in the field, with their asses or camels on the road, at all hours, in all places, their rifles are slung, their swords by their side, and their pistols in their belts. Their daring chief, too, goes forth on his expeditions equipped in a helmet of steel and a coat of linked mail. In this respect also the words of prophecy are fulfilled: "Moab hath been at ease from his youth. . . . Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that *I will send unto him wanderers, that shall cause him to wander, and shall empty his vessels, and break his bottles*" (Jer. xlviii. 12). What could be more graphic than this? The *wandering* Bedawîn are now the scourge of Moab; they cause the few inhabitants that remain in it to settle down amid the fastnesses of the rocks and mountains, and often to *wander* from city to city, in the vain hope of finding rest and security.



STONE DOOR.



INTERIOR SHOWING STONE ROOF.



THE MOUNTAINS AND OAKS OF BASHAN.

Leaving Kerioth I turned my back on Moab's desolate plain, and began to climb the Mountains of Bashan. Bleak and rocky at the base, they soon assume bolder outlines and exhibit grander features. Ravines cut deeply into their sides; bare cliffs shoot out from tangled jungles of dwarf ilex, woven together with brambles and creeping plants; pointed cones of basalt, strewn here and there with cinders and ashes, tower up until a wreath of snow is wound round their heads; straggling trees of the great old oaks of Bashan dot thinly the lower declivities; higher up little groves of them appear, and higher still, around the loftiest peaks, are dense forests. Our road was a goat-track, which wound along the side of a brawling mountain torrent, now scaling a dizzy crag high over it, and now diving down again till the spray of its miniature cascades dashed over our horses. For nearly two hours we rode up that wild and picturesque mountain side. We passed several small villages perched like fortresses on projecting cliffs, and we saw other larger ones in the distance; they are all deserted; and during those two hours we did not meet, nor see, nor hear a human being. We saw partridges among the rocks, and eagles sweeping in graceful circles round the mountain tops, and two or three foxes and one hyena, startled from their lairs by the sound of our horses' feet; but we saw no man, no herd, no flock. The time of judgment predicted by Isaiah has surely come to this part of the land of Israel: "Behold, *the Lord maketh the land empty*, and *maketh it waste*, and turneth it upside down, and *scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled;* for the Lord hath spoken this word" (Isa. xxiv. 1, 3).

On one of the southern peaks of the mountain range, some two thousand feet above the vale of Kerioth, stands the town of Hebrân. Its shattered walls and houses looked

exceedingly picturesque, as we wound up a deep ravine, shooting out far overhead from among the tufted foliage of the evergreen oak. Our little cavalcade was seen approaching, and ere we reached the brow of the hill the whole population had come out to meet and welcome us. The sheikh, a noble-looking young Druse, had already sent a man to bring a kid from the nearest flock to make a feast for us, and we saw him bounding away through an opening in the forest. He returned in half an hour with the kid on his shoulder. We assured the hospitable sheikh that it was impossible for us to remain. Our servants were already far away over the plain, and we had a long journey before us. He would listen to no excuse. The feast *must* be prepared. "My lord could not pass by his servant's house without honouring him by eating a morsel of bread, and partaking of the kid which is being made ready. The sun is high; the day is long; rest for a time under my roof; eat and drink, and then pass on in peace." There was so much of the true spirit of patriarchal hospitality here, so much that recalled to mind scenes in the life of Abraham (Gen. xviii. 2), and Manoah (Judges xiii. 15), and other Scripture celebrities, that we found it hard to refuse. Time pressed, however, and we were reluctantly compelled to leave before the kid was served.

In the town of Hebrân are many objects of interest. The ruins of a beautiful temple, built in A.D. 155, and of several other public edifices, are strewn over the summit and rugged sides of the hill. But the simple, massive, primeval houses were to us objects of greater attraction. Many of them are perfect, and in them the modern inhabitants find ample and comfortable accommodation. The stone doors appeared even more massive than those of Kerioth; and we found the walls of the houses in some instances more than seven feet thick. Hebrân must have been one of the most ancient cities of Bashan. The view from it is magnificent. The whole country, from Kerioth to Bozrah, and from Bozrah

to Salcah, was spread out before me like an embossed map; while away beyond, east, south, and west, the panorama stretched to the horizon. Two miles below me, on a projecting ridge, lay the deserted town of Afineh, thought by some to be the ancient Ashteroth-Karnaim; about three miles eastward the grey towers of Sehweh, a large town and castle, rose up from the midst of a dense oak forest. About the same distance northward is Kufr, another town whose walls still stand, and its *stone gates, about ten feet high, remain in their places.* Yet the town is deserted. Truly one might repeat, in every part of Bashan, the remarkable words of Isaiah: "*In the city is left desolation; and the gate is smitten with destruction*" (Isa. xxiv. 12). We observed in wandering through Hebrân, as we had done previously at Kerioth and other cities, that the large buildings,—temples, palaces, churches, and mosques,—are now universally used as folds for sheep and cattle. We saw hundreds of animals in the palaces of Kerioth, and the large buildings of Hebrân were so filled with their dung that we could scarcely walk through them. This also was foreseen and foretold by the Hebrew prophets: "The defenced city shall be desolate, and left like a wilderness; *there shall the calf feed, and there shall he lie down.* . . . The *palaces* shall be forsaken, ... the *forts* and *towers shall be for dens* for ever, a joy of wild asses, *a pasture of flocks*" (Isa. xxvii. 10; xxxii. 14). And of Moab Isaiah says: "The cities of Aroer are forsaken; *they shall be for flocks, which shall lie down,* and none shall make them afraid" (Isa. xvii. 2).

From Hebrân we rode along the mountain side in a north-westerly direction, crossing a Roman road which formerly connected the capital, Bozrah, with Kufr, Kanterah, and other large towns among the mountains. It is now "*desolate*," like all the highways of Bashan, and in places completely covered over with the branches of oak trees and straggling brambles. In an hour we passed a group of

large villages, occupied by a few families of Druses. Here, too, we found that the largest houses are now used as stables for camels and folds for sheep. Continuing to descend the terraced but desolate hill-sides, crossing several streamlets flowing through picturesque glens, and leaving a number of deserted villages to the right and left, we at length reached Suweideh, which we had previously visited on our way to Bozrah.

I had now crossed over the southern section of the ridge, and had completed my short tour among the mountains of Bashan. It was not without feelings of regret that, after a visit so brief, I was about to turn away from this interesting region, most probably for ever. I felt glad, however, that I had been privileged to visit, even for so brief a period, a country renowned in early history, and sacred as one of the first provinces bestowed by God on his ancient people. The freshness and picturesque beauty of the scenery, the extent and grandeur of the ruins, the hearty and repeated welcomes of the people, the truly patriarchal hospitality with which I was everywhere entertained, but, above all, the convincing, overwhelming testimony afforded at every step to the minute accuracy of Scripture history, and the literal fulfilment of prophecy, filled my mind with such feelings of joy and of thankfulness as I had never before experienced. I had often read of Bashan,—how the Lord had delivered into the hands of the tribe of Manasseh, Og, its giant king, and all his people. I had observed the statement that a single province of his kingdom, Argob, contained *threescore great cities*, fenced with high walls, gates, and bars, besides *unwalled towns a great many*. I had examined my map, and had found that *the whole of Bashan* is not larger than an ordinary English county. I confess I was astonished; and though my faith in the Divine Record was not shaken, yet I felt that some strange statistical mystery hung over the passage, which required to be cleared up. That one city, nurtured by the commerce of a

mighty empire, might grow till her people could be numbered by millions, I could well believe; that two or even three great commercial cities might spring up in favoured localities, almost side by side, I could believe too. But that *sixty* walled cities, besides *unwalled towns a great many*, should exist in a small province, at such a remote age, far from the sea, with no rivers and little commerce, appeared to be inexplicable. Inexplicable, mysterious though it appeared, it was true. On the spot, with my own eyes, I had now verified it. A list of more than *one hundred* ruined cities and villages, situated in these mountains alone, I had in my hands; and on the spot I had tested it, and found it accurate, though not complete. More than thirty of these I had myself visited or passed close by. Many others I had seen in the distance. The extent of some of them I measured, and have already stated. Of their high antiquity I could not, after inspecting them, entertain a doubt; and I have explained why. Here, then, we have a venerable Record, more than three thousand years old, containing incidental descriptions, statements, and statistics, which few men would be inclined to receive on trust, which not a few are now attempting to throw aside as "glaring absurdities," and "gross exaggerations," and yet which close and thorough examination proves to be accurate in the most minute details. Here, again, are prophecies of *ruin and utter desolation*, pronounced and recorded when this country was in the height of its prosperity,—when its vast plains waved with corn, when its hill-sides were clothed with vineyards, when its cities and villages resounded with the busy hum of a teeming population; and now, after my survey of Bashan, if I were asked to describe the present state of plains, mountains, towns, and villages, I could not possibly select language more appropriate, more accurate, or more graphic, than the language of these very prophecies. My unalterable conviction is, that the eye of the Omniscient God alone could have

foreseen a doom so terrible as that which has fallen on Moab and Bashan.

ARGOB.

From Suweideh I rode north-west across the noble plain of Bashan, passing in succession the villages of Welgha, Rimeh, Mezraah, and Sijn, and seeing many others away on the right and left. Most of them contain a few families of Druses; but not one-tenth of the habitable houses in them are inhabited. These houses are in every respect similar to those in the mountains. I was now approaching the remarkable province of Lejah, the ancient *Argob*, properly so called. A four hours' ride brought me to Nejrân, whose massive black walls and heavy square towers rise up lonely and desolate from the midst of a wilderness of rocks. The town has still a comparatively large population; that is, there are probably a hundred families settled in the old houses, which cover a space more than two miles in circumference. It contains a number of public buildings, the largest of which is a church, dedicated, as a Greek inscription informs us, in the year A.D. 564.

Nejrân stands just within the southern border of the Lejah. Around the city, and far as I could see westward and northward, was one vast wilderness of rocks;—here piled up in shapeless, jagged masses; there spread out in flat, rugged fields, intersected by yawning fissures and chasms. The Bible name of the province, *Argob*,* "the Stony," is strikingly descriptive of its physical features. I made a vigorous effort to penetrate to the interior of the Lejah, in order to visit those strange old cities which I saw in the distance from the towers of Nejrân, and of which I had heard so much; but no one would undertake to guide me,

* Argob appears to have been the home of the warlike tribe of Geshurites. Absalom's mother was Maacah, daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur (2 Sam. iii. 3); and when he slew his brother Amnon he fled, "and went to Geshur, and was there three years" (xiii. 38). Probably much of Absalom's wild and wayward spirit may be attributed to maternal training, and to the promptings of his relatives the Geshurites.

and the Druses absolutely refused to be responsible for my safety should I make the attempt. The Lejah, in fact, is the sanctuary, the great natural stronghold of the people. When fleeing from the Bedawîn, and when in rebellion against the government, they find themselves perfectly safe in its rocky recesses. They are consequently jealous of all strangers, and they will not under any ordinary circumstances, guide travellers through its intricate and secret passes. Argob, Trachonitis, or Lejah,—for by each name has it been successively called,—has been an asylum for all malefactors and refugees ever since the time when Absalom fled to it after the murder of his brother.

Being prevented from passing through the centre of the Lejah, we turned westward to Edrei, hoping to be more fortunate in obtaining guides there. The path along which we were led was intricate, difficult, and in places even dangerous. We had often to scramble over smooth ledges of basalt, where our horses could scarcely keep their feet; and these were separated by deep fissures and chasms, here and there half filled with muddy water. A stranger would have sought in vain for the road, if road it can be called. In half an hour we reached the plain; and then continued to ride along the side of the Lejah, whose boundary resembles the rugged line of broken cliffs which gird a great part of the eastern coast of England. The Hebrew name given to it in the Bible is most appropriate, and shows how observant the sacred writers were. The word is *Chebel*, signifying literally "a rope," but which describes with singular accuracy the remarkably defined boundary line which encircles the whole province like a rocky shore.

We passed in succession the deserted towns of Kirâtah, Taârah, and Duweireh, all built within the Lejah; and we saw many others on the plain to the left, and among the rocks on the right. We entered the town of Busr el-Harîry, but were received with such scowling looks and savage threats and curses by its Moslem inhabitants, that we were

glad to effect our escape. We now felt that on leaving the Druse territory we had left hospitality and welcome behind, and that henceforth outbursts of Moslem fanaticism awaited us everywhere.

EDREI.

Soon after leaving Busr, the towers of Edrei came in sight, extending along the summit of a projecting ledge of rocks in front, and running some distance into the interior of the Lejah on the right. Crossing a deep ravine, and ascending the rugged ridge of rocks by a winding path like a goat-track, we came suddenly on the ruins of this ancient city. The situation is most remarkable:—without a single spring of living water; without river or stream; without access, except over rocks and through defiles all but impassable; without tree or garden. In selecting the site, everything seems to have been sacrificed to security and strength. Shortly after my arrival I went up to the terraced roof of a house, to obtain a general view of the ruins. Their aspect was far from inviting; it was wild and savage in the extreme. The huge masses of shattered masonry could scarcely be distinguished from the rocks that encircle them; and all, ruins and rocks alike, are black, as if scathed by lightning. I saw several square towers, and remains of temples, churches, and mosques. The private houses are low, massive, gloomy, and manifestly of the highest antiquity. The inhabitants are chiefly Moslems; but as there is a little Christian community, we selected the house of their sheikh as our temporary residence.

Under the guidance of our host, we went out in the afternoon to inspect the principal buildings of the city. A crowd of fanatical Moslems gathered round, and followed us wherever we went, trying every means to annoy and insult us. We paid no attention to them, and hoped thus to escape worse treatment. Unfortunately our hopes were vain. I was suddenly struck down by a blow of a club

while copying an inscription. The crowd then rushed upon us in a body with stones, clubs, swords, and knives. I was separated from my companions, pursued by some fifty or sixty savages, all thirsting for my blood. After some hard struggles, which I cannot look back to even yet without a shudder, I succeeded in reaching our temporary home. Here I found my companions, like myself, severely wounded, and almost faint from loss of blood. Our Druse guard defended the house till midnight, and then, thanks to a merciful Providence, we made our escape from Edrei.

Edrei was the capital city of the giant Og. On the plain beside it he marshalled his forces to oppose the advancing host of the Israelites. He fell, his army was totally routed, and Edrei was taken by the conquerors (Num. xxi. 33; Deut. iii. 1–4). Probably it did not remain long in the hands of the Israelites, for we hear no more of it in the Bible. The monuments now found in it show that it was one of the most important cities of Bashan in the time of the Romans. After the Saracenic conquest, it gradually dwindled down from a metropolitan city to a poor village; and now, though the ruins are some three miles in circuit, it does not contain more than five hundred inhabitants. How applicable are the words of Ezekiel both to the *physical* and to the *social* state of Edrei! "Thus saith the Lord, . . . Behold, I, even I, will bring a sword upon you, and *I will destroy your high places.* . . . . In all your dwelling-places *the cities shall be laid waste*, and the high places shall be desolate" (Ezek. vi. 3, 6). "*I will bring the worst of the heathen*, and they shall possess their houses. . . . . Say unto the people of the land, Thus saith the Lord God, ... They shall eat their bread with carefulness, and drink their water with astonishment, ... *because of the violence of all them that dwell therein.* Every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished" (Ezek. vii. 24; xii. 19, &c.)

In darkness and silence we rode out of Edrei. For more than an hour we were led through rugged and intricate

paths among the rocks, scarcely venturing to hope that we should ever reach the plain in safety. We did reach it, however, and with grateful hearts we rode on, guided by the stars. Before long we were again entangled in the rocky mazes of this wild region, and resolved, after several vain attempts to get out, to wait for daylight. The night wind was cold, bitterly cold; my wounds were stiff and painful; and there was no shelter from the blast save that of the shattered rocks. The spot, too, was neither safe nor pleasant for a bivouac. The mournful howl of the jackal, the sharp ringing bark of the wolf, and the savage growl of the hyena, were heard all round us. Gradually they came nearer and closer. Our poor horses quivered in every limb. We were forced to keep marching round them; for we saw by the bright star-light and the flashing eyes, that the rocks on every side were tenanted with enemies almost as dangerous and bloodthirsty as the men of Edrei. There I knew for the first time what it was to spend a night with the wild beasts; and there I had, too, a practical and painful illustration of Isaiah's remarkable prediction, "*The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the wild beasts of the island, and the satyr shall cry to his fellow*," &c. (Isa. xxxiv. 14.)

Day-light came at last—not with the slow, stealing step of the West, but with the swiftness and beauty of Eastern climes. Mounting our jaded horses, we rode on between huge black stones and crags of naked rock. Climbing to the top of a little hill, we got a wide view over the Lejah. I could only compare it to the ruins of a Cyclopean city prostrate and desolate. There was not one pleasing feature. The very trees that grow amid the rocks have a blasted look. Yet, strange as it may seem, this forbidding region is thickly studded with ancient towns and villages, long ago deserted. Passing through the Lejah to the town of Khubab, we rode on northward along its border, leaving the towns of Hazkîn, Eib, Musmîeh, and others, on

our right. They are all deserted, and tnere is not a single inhabited spot east of Khubab. The rich and beautiful plain on the north of the Lejah is now desolate as the Lejah itself, and in a ride of ten miles we did not see a human being. We pursued our route to Deir Ali, and thence over the Pharpar, at Kesweh, to Damascus.

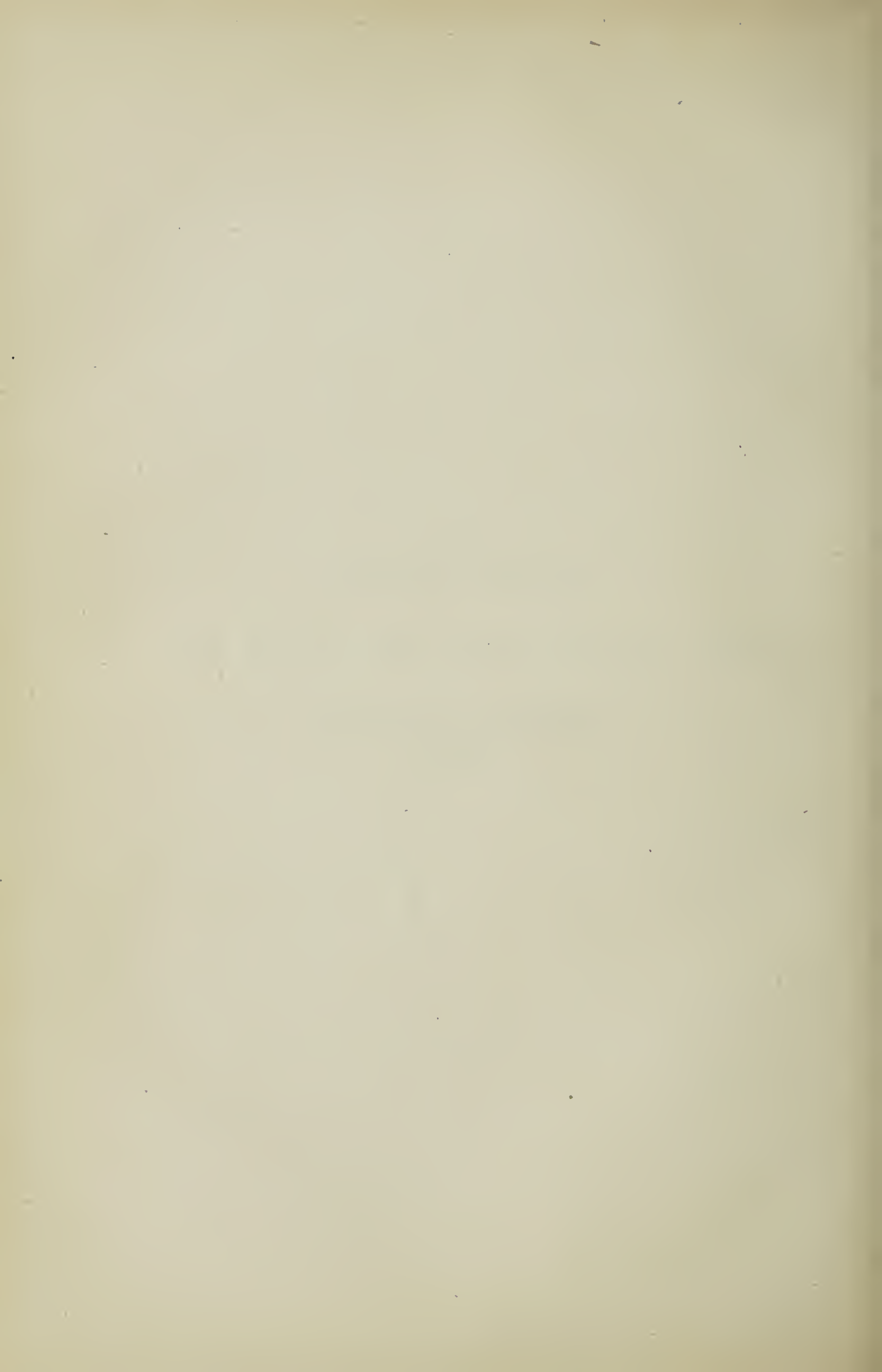
Thus ended my tour through eastern Bashan, and my explorations of its giant cities.





THE JORDAN AND THE DEAD SEA







The Jordan and the Dead Sea.

"O my God, ... I will remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar."—Ps. xlii. 6.

THERE is no river in the world like the Jordan;—none so wonderful in its historic memories, none so hallowed in its sacred associations, and none so remarkable in its physical geography. It is THE RIVER of the Holy Land. It has been more or less intimately connected with all the great events of Scripture history from the patriarchs to the apostles. Its banks have been the scene of the most stupendous miracles of judgment, power, and love, ever the earth witnessed. When the fire of heaven had burnt up Sodom's guilty cities and polluted plain, the waters of the Jordan rolled over them and buried them for ever from the face of man. Thrice was the swollen torrent of that river stayed, and its channel divided to let God's people and prophets pass over "dry shod." Once, at the bidding of the man of God, the iron axe rose buoyant from its channel, and floated on its surface. Once its waters gave forth healing virtue, as if to prove to the proud Syrian chief the fallacy of his sneering exclamation,—"Are not Abana and Pharpar rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Israel?" Greater still were those miracles of our Lord which the evangelists have grouped thickly on and around the central lake of the Jordan. There did the storm-tossed billows hear and obey the voice of their Creator; there did the incarnate God walk upon the face of the deep; there, obedient to His will,

the fishes filled the disciples' nets; along those shores the lame walked, the deaf heard, the blind saw, the sick were healed, lepers were cleansed, the dead were raised to life again. But the most glorious event the Jordan ever witnessed was Christ's baptism; for when he was baptized, "the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him;" and when the Divine Son was perfectly equipped for his great work of redeeming love—when just about to set out on his glorious mission—the voice of the Divine Father pierces the vault of heaven, and proclaims to the astonished and joyful disciples on Jordan's banks the divine approval of both work and worker,—"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Surely, then, we may say that every spot along this stream is "holy ground," and that the name JORDAN is not only emblazoned on the page of history, but enshrined in the Christian's heart.

It would almost seem as if nature or nature's God had from the first prepared this river to be the scene of wondrous events, by giving to its physical geography some wondrous characteristics. Its principal fountain, bursting from the base of Hermon, is, like the mouths of other rivers, *on the level of the ocean.** It descends rapidly through its whole course, and at length empties into the Dead Sea, whose surface has a *depression* of no less than 1312 feet. The whole valley of the Jordan is thus a huge rent or fissure in the earth's crust. Though it is not much over a hundred miles in length, at its southern end, along the shores of that mysterious lake, we have the climate and products of the tropics, while at its northern end on the brow of Hermon, we have a region of perpetual snow.

* Some geographers give the fountain of Dan an elevation of 600, others 500, others 300 feet; but these seem to be erroneous, as I have shown in the article JORDAN, in "Kitto's Cyclopædia," last edition.

THE FOUNTAINS.

It was on a bright and cloudless summer day I first visited the fountains of the Jordan. On the preceding night I slept on a snow wreath, on the very peak of Hermon. Beside me, in a hallowed rock, the fire of Baal had often burnt in bygone ages, and around me were the great stones of Baal's altar and the shattered ruins of a later temple. There I was enabled to prove for the first time how accurate was the name given to this mount by the sacred writers, *Baal-Hermon* (Judg. iii. 3; 1 Chron. v. 23). A noble spot that was for the worship of the great fire-god. His priests could see the sun rising from the eastern desert long before his beams lighted up the plains below, and they could see him sinking slowly in the western sea long after he had set to the shores of Phœnicia; and then at night, on that commanding peak, they could kindle a flame whose light would flash far and wide over Syria and Palestine. Wishing to realize something of the grandeur of those old Baal-fires, we gathered a great quantity of the dry prickly shrubs that cover the mountain sides, piled them up on the rock where the fire used to burn, and applied a match. The air was perfectly still, and the flame seemed to shoot up into the very heavens, while Hermon's icy crown gleamed and glittered in the ruddy light.

The descent from the top of Hermon to the fountains of the Jordan was as if one had travelled in a single day from Greenland to the equator. The heat was most oppressive when, emerging from a wild mountain glen, we entered the marshy plain of Merom. Away in front our guide pointed out a little isolated *tell*, apparently in the centre of the great plain,—"That," said he, "is Tell el-kady." We were soon beside it, and tying up my horse beneath the shade of a noble oak—a straggler from the forests of Bashan—I set out to explore.

DAN.

The tell is cup-shaped, like an extinct crater, which it perhaps may be, for the stones of the surrounding plain are volcanic. From its western base bursts forth one of the largest fountains in Syria, its waters forming a miniature lake, and then rushing off across the plain southward a deep rapid river. Within the tell, beneath the branches of the great oak, is a smaller fountain, whose stream breaks through the circling rim, and foaming down the side, joins its sister. *This is the principal source of the Jordan.*

But the tell, has it no name in history, no story or legend to attract the notice of the passing pilgrim or the Bible student? It had once a historic name, which is not yet quite gone; and its story is a long and a sad one. I wandered over it wherever it was possible to go. I found a few heaps of rubbish and old building stones, a few remains of massive foundations, a few fragments of columns almost buried in the soil, vast thickets of thorns, briars, and gigantic thistles, some impenetrable jungles of cane and thorn bushes, but nothing else; and yet this is the site of the great border city of Dan. Upon this hill Jeroboam built a temple, and set up in its shrine one of his golden calves, thus polluting that "Holy Land" which the Lord gave in covenant promise to the seed of Abraham. Therefore has the curse come upon Dan. Though one of the noblest sites in Palestine, though encompassed by a plain of unrivalled fertility, it and its plain are now alike desolate. The prophetic curse is fulfilled to the letter,—"*In all your dwelling places the cities shall be laid waste, and the high places shall be desolate; that your altars may be laid waste and made desolate, and your idols may be broken and cease, and your works may be abolished*" (Ezek. vi. 6).

It is interesting to note how the old name clings to the spot still, though in an Arabic translation. *Tell el-kâdy* signifies "the hill of the *judge*," and the Hebrew word *Dan* means "judge" (Gen. xlix. 16).

CÆSAREA PHILIPPI.

Half an hour across the plain, through pleasant forest glades, bordered with myrtle, acacia, and oleander, and another half hour up a rugged mountain side, beneath the shade of Bashan's stately oaks, brought me to the site of the old Greek city of Panium, which Herod the Great rebuilt, and renamed Cæsarea-Philippi. This is one of the very few really beautiful spots in Palestine. Behind rises Hermon, steep, rugged, and grand, one of its lower peaks crowned by the frowning battlements of a Phœnician castle. In front stretches out the broad plain of Merom, like a vast meadow, and away beyond it is the mountain range of Lebanon. The city stood upon a natural terrace, which is interspersed with groves of oaks and olives and shrubberies of hawthorn, myrtle, and acacia, and is all alive with streams of water and miniature cascades, fretting here and there against prostrate column and ruined wall. It is, in fact, as Dean Stanley has happily named it, a Syrian Tivoli.

Behind the ruins rises a cliff of ruddy limestone. At its base is a dark cave, now nearly filled with the ruins of a temple. From the cave, from the ruins, from every chink and cranny in the soil and rocks around, waters gush forth, which soon collect into a torrent, dash in sheets of foam down a rocky bed, and at length plunge over a precipice into a deep dark ravine. *This is the other great fountain of the Jordan.*

It is "holy ground," for Jesus was here. Beside the fountain he uttered those memorable words, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church" (Matt. xvi. 13–20; xvii. 1–13). May not the sight of the great cliff overhead have suggested the peculiar form of the expression? And we read that six days afterwards Christ took three of his disciples, and led them "*up into an high mountain*, and was transfigured before them." Standing there amid the ruins of Cæsarea, one does not need to

ask where the Mount of Transfiguration is. Hermon, the grandest and the most beautiful of all the mountains of Palestine, has established its claim to the title of "holy mount."

THE WATERS OF MEROM.

The streams from Dan and Cæsarea unite with several others and flow into a little lake, which is called in Scripture the "waters of Merom." On the north and east it is shut in by impenetrable marshes, but on the south-west is a considerable expanse of higher plain and rolling downs, above which, on the mountain side, are the ruins of the great city of Hazor. Here Jabin, the head of the northern Canaanitish tribes, assembled all his forces and numerous allies, and drew up his war chariots and cavalry, for a final attempt to drive back the Israelites. But God fought for Israel. The attack was sudden, and the route complete. When I stood on the mountain-brow, near the ruins of that royal city, and looked down on the battle-field hemmed in by the river, the lake, the marshes, and the mountains, I saw how the panic-stricken Canaanites, with their horses and chariots, would be hurled together in confused and helpless masses on the marshy plain and in the narrow ravines, and would become an easy prey to the victorious Israelites, who "smote them until they left them none remaining, ... and houghed their horses, and burned their chariots with fires" (Josh. xi). This victory virtually completed the conquest of Palestine.

A few miles below the lake the Jordan is spanned by the "Bridge of Jacob's Daughters,"—a name for which it is not easy to account. So far the Jordan glides lazily along through a grassy vale, between reedy banks, on which the buffalo and the wild swine find a fitting home; but at the bridge the vale becomes a wild ravine, and the sluggish stream a foaming torrent. Along its banks I rode, guided by an Arab chief, now following the windings of the chan-

nel, now crossing a high projecting bluff. The mad river never rests until, breaking from its rocky barriers, it enters the rich plain of Bethsaida,—that Bethsaida near which Jesus fed the five thousand with five loaves (Luke ix. 10). After a passing visit to the desolate site, I continued my journey, and found my tent pitched at the mouth of the Jordan.

THE SEA OF GALILEE.

It was a lovely spot. I sat there in my tent-door, and looked long and eagerly over one of the most interesting panoramas in the world. There was nothing to disturb me,—no din of human life, no jarring sound of human toil or struggle. The silence was profound. Even nature seemed to have fallen asleep. The river glided noiselessly past, and the sea was spread out before me like a polished mirror, reflecting from its glassy bosom the gorgeous tints of the evening sky; and both sea and river were fringed with a bright border of oleander flowers. East of the lake, the side of Bashan's lofty plateau rose as a mountain chain; and at its northern end my eye rested on the very scene of that miracle of mercy, where thousands were fed; and at its southern end, on that of the miracle of judgment, where "the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place, and perished in the waters." Away on the west the shattered ramparts of Tiberias seemed to rise out of the bosom of the lake, and behind them a dark mountain, in whose caverned cliffs repose the ashes of many a learned rabbin, while over all appeared the graceful rounded top of Tabor. Farther to the right, on the white strand, I saw the huts of Magdala, with the coast of Gennesaret extending from it northward to Capernaum,—Christ's own city. Far on into the night I sat by the silent shore of Galilee, gazing, now on the dark outlines of hill and mountain, now on the crescent moon, as she rose in her splendour, and now on the bright stars, as they hung trembling in the deep dark vault of heaven.

"All things were calm, and fair, and passive. Earth
Looked as if lulled upon an angel's lap
Into a breathless dewy sleep; so still,
That I could only say of things, they be!
The lakelet now, no longer vexed with gusts,
Replaced upon her breast the pictured moon,
Pearled round with stars."

CHORAZIN, BETHSAIDA, AND CAPERNAUM.

Before the morning sun o'ertopped the hills of Bashan I was in the saddle. A ride of three miles westward along the shore brought me to the ruins of a large town. It was encompassed by such a dense jungle of thorns, thistles, and rank weeds, that I had to employ some shepherds to open a passage for me. Clambering to the top of a shattered wall I was able to overlook the whole site. What a scene of desolation was that! Not a house, not a wall, not a solitary pillar remains standing. Broken columns, hewn stones, sculptured slabs of marble, and great shapeless heaps of rubbish, half concealed by thorns and briars, alone serve to mark the site of a great and rich city. The Arabian does not pitch his tent there, the shepherd does not feed his flock there,—not a sound fell upon my ear as I stood amid those ruins save the gentle murmur of each wave as it broke upon the pebbly beach, and the mournful sighing of the summer breeze through sun-scorched branches; yet that is the place where CHORAZIN once stood! Chorazin heard but rejected the words of mercy from the lips of its Lord, and he pronounced its doom,—"*Woe unto thee, Chorazin!*" (Matt. xi. 21).

After riding some three miles farther along the lake I reached a little retired bay, with a pebbly strand,—just such a place as fishermen would delight to draw up their boats and spread out their nets upon. Here were numerous fountains, several old tanks and aqueducts, great heaps of rubbish, and fields of ruin. Two Arab tents were pitched a little way up on the hill side, but I saw no other trace there of human habitation or human life; and yet that

is the site of *Bethsaida*,—the city of Andrew and Peter, James and John (John i. 44; Matt. iv. 8; Luke v. 10). Upon this strand Jesus called his first disciples. Like Chorazin, this city heard and rejected his words, and like Chorazin, it has been left desolate. "Woe unto thee, Beth saida!"

A few minutes more and I reached the brow of a bluff promontory, which dips into the bosom of the lake. Before me now opened up the fertile plain of Gennesaret. At my feet, beneath the western brow of the cliff, a little fountain burst from a rocky basin. A fig-tree spreads its branches over it, and gives it a name,—*Ain-et-Tîn*, "the fountain of the fig." Beside it are some massive foundations, scarcely distinguishable amid the rank weeds, and away beyond it, almost covered with thickets of thorns, briars, and gigantic thistles, I saw large heaps of ruins and rubbish. These are all that now mark the site of Capernaum. Christ's words are fulfilled to the letter,—"*And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell*" (Matt. xi. 23).

On that day I climbed a peak which commands the lake, and the Jordan valley up to the waters of Merom. The principal scene of Christ's public labours lay around me—a region some thirty miles long by ten wide. When He had his home at Capernaum, the whole country was teeming with life, and bustle, and industry. No less than ten large cities, with numerous villages, studded the shores of the lake, and the plains and the hill-sides around. The water was all speckled with the dark boats and white sails of Galilee's fishermen. Eager multitudes followed the footsteps of Jesus, through the city streets, over the flower-strewn fields, along the pebbly beach. What a woeful change has passed over the land since that time! The Angel of destruction has been there. From that commanding height, through the clear Syrian atmosphere, I was able to distinguish, by the aid of my glass, every spot in

that wide region, celebrated in sacred history, or hallowed by sacred association. My eye swept the lake from north to south, from east to west; not a single sail, not a solitary boat was there. My eye swept the great Jordan valley, the little plains, the glens, the mountain sides from base to summit—not a city, not a village, not a house, not a sign of settled habitation was there, except the few huts of Magdala, and the shattered houses of Tiberias. A mournful and solitary silence reigned triumphant. Desolation keeps unbroken Sabbath in Galilee now. Nature has lavished on the country some of her choicest gifts;—a rich soil, a genial climate; but the curse of heaven has come upon it because of the sin of man. I saw how wondrously time has changed a prophetic sentence into a graphic reality. "*I will make your cities waste, saith the Lord; I will bring the land into desolation. I will scatter you among the heathen. Upon the land shall come up thorns and briars; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city. So that the generation to come of your children that shall rise up after you, and the stranger that shall come from a far land, shall say, when they see the plagues of that land, Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this land? What meaneth the heat of this great anger?*" (Lev. xxvi.; Deut. xxix.; Isa. xxxii.)

THE LOWER JORDAN.

Between the Lake of Galilee and the Dead Sea lies a long deep valley, varying from five to ten miles in breadth, and shut in by the parallel mountain ranges of Samaria and Gilead. Down the centre of this valley, in the bed of a deep ravine, winds the river Jordan. It has two distinct lines of banks. The first or lower banks confine the stream, are comparatively low, generally alluvial, and thickly fringed with foliage. The second, or upper banks are at some distance from the channel—occasionally nearly half a mile apart, and in places they rise to a height of one hund-

red and fifty feet. The appearance of the river itself is exceedingly varied. Now it sweeps gracefully round a green meadow, softly kissing with its rippling waves the blushing flowers of the oleander as they bend over it;—now it clasps a wooded islet in its shining arms;—now fretted by projecting cliffs, and opposed by rocky ledges, it dashes madly forward in sheets of foam.

One bridge alone spans the river, on the road which joins the ancient cities of Bethshean and Gadara. But the ruins of many others are visible, and the fords are numerous. Of the latter, one of the most remarkable is *Succoth*, where Jacob crossed with his flocks and herds (Gen. xxxiii. 17), and where the fleeing hosts of Zebah and Zalmunna suffered so terribly from the Israelites (Judges vii. 24, sq.; viii. 4–10). The plain around Succoth is abundantly watered by fountains and streamlets from the mountains. The soil is exceedingly rich. Dr. Robinson says of it, "The grass intermingled with tall daisies and wild oats, reached to our horses' backs, while the thistles sometimes overtopped the riders' heads." Jacob showed his usual worldly wisdom, when he encamped at this favoured spot, and "made booths (*Succoth*) for his cattle."

But the most interesting spot on the Jordan is unquestionably that now called the "pilgrims' bathing-place," opposite Jericho. Here the channel is deep, the current rapid, and yet, on three different occasions, the river was stayed by a miracle, and the channel left dry, to let God's people pass over. And an interest still higher and holier clings to it. It is the scene of Christ's baptism. Sitting here one day on the river's bank, beneath the shade of a great willow-tree, I read in succession the Bible narratives of the passage of the Israelites under Joshua, of the translation of Elijah, and of the baptism of Jesus; and then looking up on those grey bluffs that bound the narrow ravine, I involuntarily exclaimed, "Oh, that my eyes had seen those glorious events of which you were the witnesses! Oh, that the

eye of sense had witnessed what the eye of faith now contemplates!—The marshalled hosts of Israel; the ark on which rested the Shekinah glory; then the fiery Chariot bearing God's prophet to heaven; and last of all, 'the Dove,' the Heavenly Dove, coming down and abiding upon the Saviour."

It was in the month of April I visited this "holy place" on the Jordan. It was already the time of harvest, for the people of Jericho were reaping their little fields up on the plain. And we are told that "Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest" (Joshua iii. 15; 1 Chron. xii. 15). The fact is still true, though Palestine is changed. The heavy rains of early spring falling on the northern mountains, and the winter snow melting on the sides of Hermon, send a thousand tributaries to the sacred river. It rises to the top of the lower banks, and when I was there, the ruddy, swollen waters had flowed over and covered portions of the verdant meadows on each side.

Mounting my horse, I followed the tortuous river to its mouth, and saw it empty its waters into that sea of death. One would almost think they flow in reluctantly, for the current becomes slower and slower, and the channel wider and wider, till at length water touches water, and the Jordan is lost. Such is this sacred river, without a parallel, historical or physical, in the whole world. A complete river beneath the level of the ocean, disappearing in a lake which has no outlet, and which could have none. In whatever way we regard it, the Jordan stands alone.

THE DEAD SEA.

The Dead Sea fills up the southern end of the Jordan valley. It is about fifty miles in length from north to south, by ten in breadth. The mountain chains which shut in the valley become here steeper, wilder, and bleaker. In some places they rise in lofty precipices of naked rock from the bosom of the waters; in others they retire, forming wild

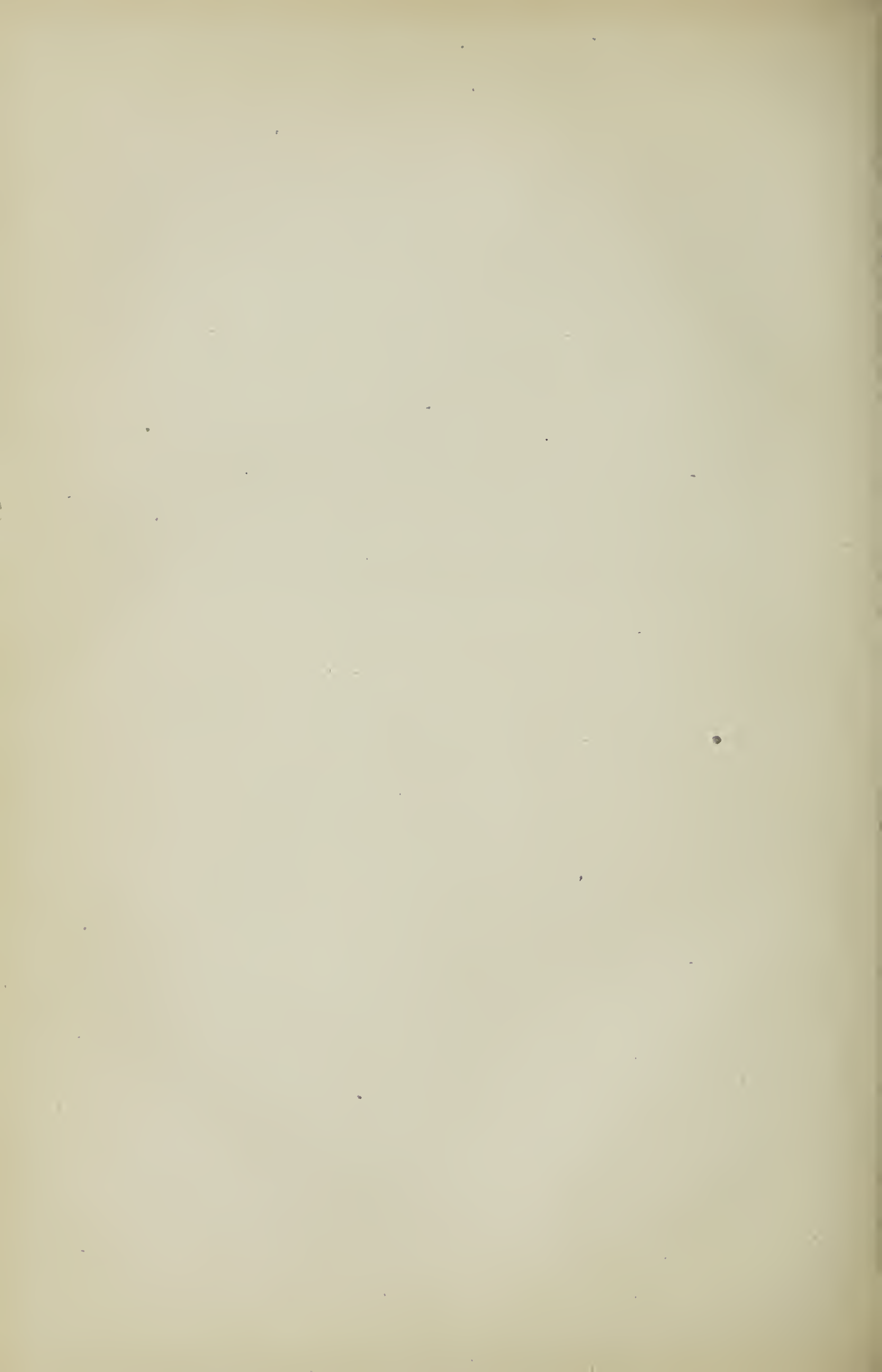
nooks and yawning ravines, fitting homes for the wild goats which still inhabit them. The scenery of the lake is bare and desolate, but grand. The water is clear and sparkling, deep and beautiful azure when the sky is cloudless, but reflecting vividly every changing hue of the firmament. In summer, when the heat is intense, a thin, whitish quivering vapour hangs over the surface of the water, and gives a strange dreamy indistinctness to the mountains. At the northern and southern ends, the flat plains are parched, and barren, in part covered with fine sand, and in part with a white nitrous coating like hoar frost. Brackish and sulphur springs occur at intervals around the whole borders of the lake. Some of them are warm, and send up clouds of steam. At one or two places along the western shore, and also at the southern end of the lake are slimy pools and marshes, whose exhalations of sulphuretted-hydrogen taint the atmosphere for miles. Strewn along the northern shore, especially near the mouth of the Jordan, lie large quantities of drift wood, brought down by the swollen river, and it is everywhere encrusted with salt crystals. The great depression, the fierce rays of an unclouded sun, the white mountain chains on each side, and the white soil below reflecting the sun's rays, give the whole basin of the Dead Sea a temperature like that of a furnace. Never did I suffer so much from intense suffocating heat as during the days I spent on the shores of the lake.

Yet still it cannot be called a "sea of death," in that sense in which travellers in former ages were wont to represent it. It has been stated that no vegetation could exist along its shores, and that no bird could fly over it; that, in fact, its poisonous exhalations are fatal alike to animal and vegetable life. This is altogether untrue. At every little fountain along the shores, the vegetation has a tropical luxuriance. I have seen the oleander dipping its gorgeous flowers into the lake; and I have seen the willow and the tamarisk, and numerous other shrubs flourishing

where their stems were at certain seasons immersed in the waters. The cane-brakes on the shore abound with wild fowl; and occasionally flocks of ducks may be seen swimming far out on the sea. The water, however, is intolerably salt and bitter, and no fish could live in it. Yet it is not altogether destitute of living creatures, a few inferior organizations having been found in it by recent naturalists. Its specific gravity is so great that the human body will not sink in it. I have tried it myself, and can, therefore, testify to the truth of the fact. This is easily accounted for. The weight of water increases in proportion to the quantity of salt it contains in solution. Ordinary sea water has about four *per cent.* of salt, whilst that of the Dead Sea contains more than *twenty-six per cent.*

The Dead Sea is thus a physical wonder, and, strange to say, it is also a historical wonder. It would appear that in ancient times, it was much smaller than it is at present, leaving room for a large and fertile plain on which the cities of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim once stood (compare Gen. xiii. 10–12). The cities were burned by fire from heaven, and the whole plain, or, as it was called, "the vale of Siddim" (xiv. 8), was covered with water (xiv. 3). Recent explorations of the sea and of the surrounding region tend, I believe, to throw some light on one of the most remarkable events of physical geography and of Biblical history. The northern section of the lake, from the mouth of the Jordan to the promontory of Lisân, is immensely deep, varying from forty to two hundred and eighteen fathoms. But the whole southern section is shallow,—only a few feet of water covering an extensive flat, in which bitumen pits, and bituminous limestone abound. The latter appears to have been the plain of Sodom, for we learn from Gen. xix. 27, 28, that the plain was visible from a hill-top near Hebron, which would not be true of any part of the Jordan valley north of En-gedi. The Bible further informs us that "the vale of Siddim was full of slime pits,"

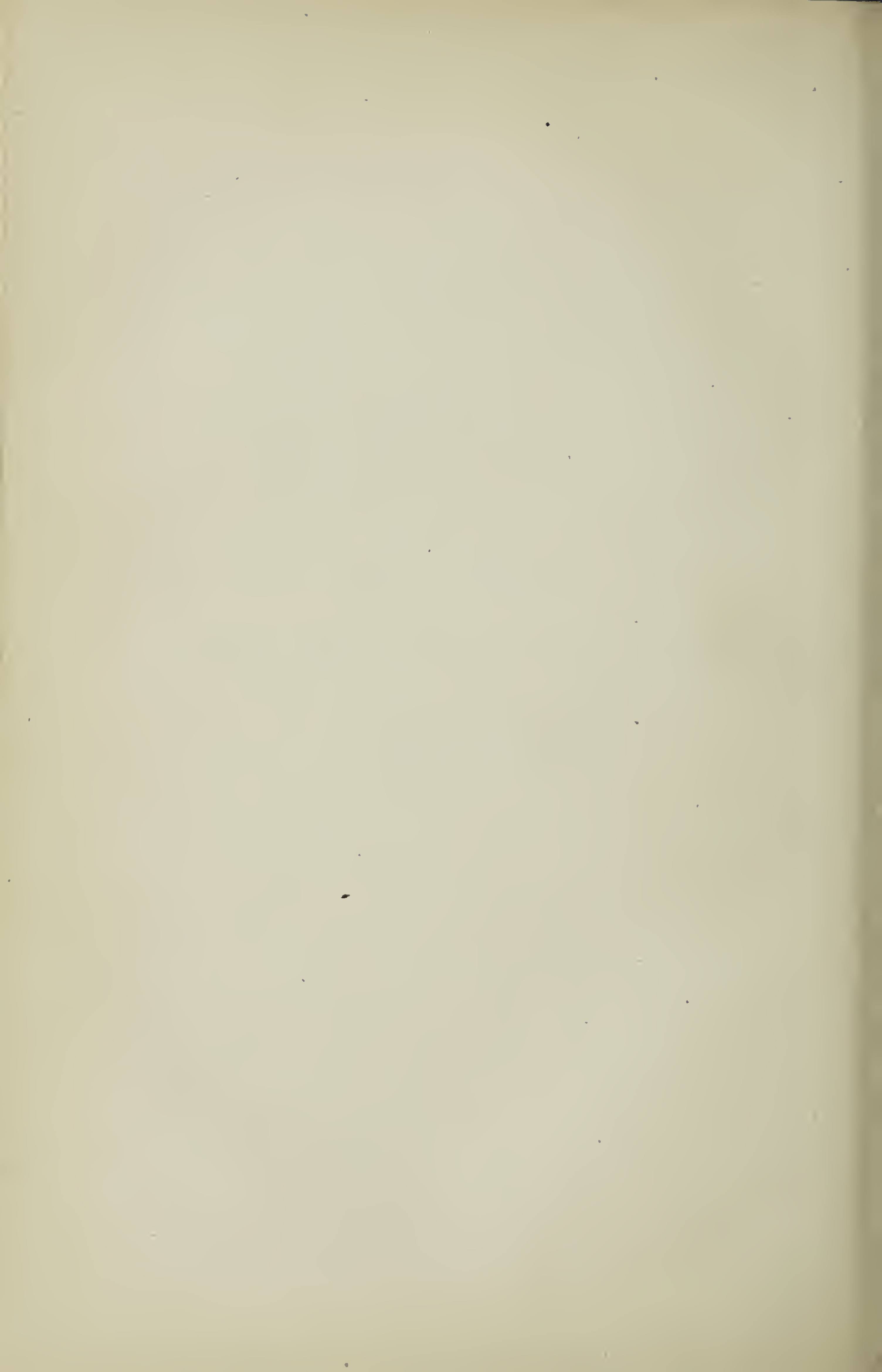
that is, pits or wells of bitumen (xiv. 10). Now we know that bitumen burns like oil, and bituminous limestone is also inflammable. May not the houses of Sodom and the other cities have been built of the latter, and, like the tower of Babel, cemented with the former? And if so, when once ignited by fire from heaven, they would burn rapidly and fiercely,—nay, the whole plain filled with its bitumen pits, and strewn with inflammable stones, would burn like a coal-field. How strikingly does this seem to illustrate the words of Scripture,—"And Abraham gat up early in the morning (from his tent at Mamre) to the place where he stood before the Lord (compare xviii. 16, 22), And he looked *toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the plain, and behold, and lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace*" (Gen. xix. 27, 28).





JERUSALEM AND ITS ENVIRONS.







Jerusalem.

"Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King."—Ps. xlviii. 2.

IT is not strange that my first night on the Mount of Olives was sleepless. Though the preceding night had been spent in the saddle, and the preceding day in fatiguing travel, yet the vision of Jerusalem, which I had that day seen for the first time, remained so vivid before my mind's eye, that it banished all thought of sleep and all sense of fatigue. For hours I lay absorbed in the stirring memories of the distant past, which holy scenes had called up and invested with the charm of reality. Mount Zion,—Moriah, crowned of yore with the halo of the Shekinah glory,—Gethsemane, bedewed with the tears, and stained by the bloody-sweat of the Son of man,—Olivet, where Jesus so often taught and prayed,—they were all there, each with its wondrous story written as if in letters of light. Longing for the morning, I once and again rose from my bed and threw open the lattice. The stars hung out like diamond lamps from the black vault of heaven, shining with a sparkling lustre unknown in our hazy west, and revealing in dim outline the walls and towers of the Holy City sleeping peacefully away below.

I was specially favoured during my first visit to Jerusalem. An old friend had rented a little tower high up on

the western side of Olivet, commanding a noble view of the Holy City and the surrounding country from Bethlehem to Mizpeh. It was one of those square turrets which in recent, as in ancient times, proprietors sometimes built in their vineyards as residences for keepers and temporary store-houses for fruit (Isa. v. 2; Matt. xxi. 33). Here I took up my quarters, and from the open window or the terraced roof, at all hours, day and night, I gazed on that wondrous landscape. During the soft, ruddy morning twilight,—at the full blaze of noon-day,—in the dead stillness of night, when the moon shed her silver rays on the white walls and roofs of the city, my eyes were upon it,—never wearying, never satisfied, but ever detecting some new beauty in tint or form, some fresh spot of sacred interest or historic renown. While I live I can never forget that view of

JERUSALEM FROM THE MOUNT OF OLIVES.

Morning dawned; and with my kind host, to whom every spot in and around Jerusalem was familiar, I ascended to the terraced roof. Behind Olivet, on the east, the sky was all aglow with red light, which shot slanting across the hill-tops and projecting cliffs, and upon the walls and prominent buildings of the city, throwing them up in bold relief from the deeply shaded glens. No time could have been more opportune, no spot better fitted for seeing and studying the general topography of the Holy City. The whole site was before us, distinct and full, like a vast and beautiful embossed picture. At our feet, along the base of Olivet, was the Kidron, a deep and narrow glen, coming down from an undulating plateau on the right, and disappearing round the shoulder of the hill on the left; its banks terraced, and dotted here and there with little groves and single olive trees. Directly opposite us was Mount Moriah, its bare sides rising precipitously from the bottom of the Kidron to a height of some two hundred feet. On its sum-

mit is a rectangular platform, about thirty acres in extent, and taking up fully one-half of the eastern side of the city. It is encompassed and supported by a massive wall, in some places nearly eighty feet high, and looking even higher where it impends over the ravine. This platform constitutes by far the most striking feature of the city. It is unique. There is nothing like it in the world. Its history, too, is wonderful. It has been "a holy place" for more than thirty centuries. Its Cyclopean walls were founded by Solomon. Upon it stood the Temple, in whose shrine the Glory of the Lord so often appeared, and in whose courts the Son of God so often taught. It is still to the Muslem *el-Haram esh-Sherîf*, "the noble sanctuary," and, next to Mecca, the most venerated sanctuary in the world. The platform itself — simple, massive, and grand — is a striking object; but the buildings it contains greatly contribute to its beauty. In its centre, on a raised area of white marble, stands one of the most splendid mosques in the world, octagonal in form, encrusted with encaustic tiles of gorgeous colours, and surmounted by a graceful dome. From its area the ground slopes away to the encircling ramparts in gentle undulations of green turf, diversified with marble arcades, gilded cupolas, fountains and prayer-niches; and interspersed with venerable cypresses, olives, and palms. At the southern end is a large group of stately buildings, including the Mosque el-Aksa, once the Church of the Virgin; and round the sides of the platform are cloisters, here and there covered with domes, and surmounted by tall minarets. The quiet seclusion of this sanctuary, the rich green of its grass and foliage, the dazzling whiteness of its pavements and fountains, the brilliant tints of the central mosque, and, above all, its sacred associations, make it one of the most charming and interesting spots on earth.

Just behind Moriah the Tyropean Valley was distinctly marked by a deeply-shaded belt, running from north to south through the city. Beyond it rose Zion, higher and

longer than Moriah; in front, a confused mass of terraced roofs, tier above tier; farther back are seen the white buildings of the Armenian Convent, like an immense factory; more to the right the new English church; and in the background, crowning the hill, the massive square keep of the Castle of David. The southern section of Zion is now outside the city wall; and there a high minaret and cupola mark the tomb of David. From it the hill sinks into the Valley of Hinnom in steep terraced slopes, covered with vineyards, olives, and corn-fields. As I looked, a moving object in one of the fields rivetted my attention. "Haste, give me the glass," I said. I turned it upon the spot. Yes, I was right; a plough and yoke of oxen were there at work. Jeremiah's prophecy was fulfilled before my eyes: "*Zion shall be ploughed like a field*" (xxvi. 18).

Along the further side of Zion runs the deep glen of Hinnom, which, turning eastward, sweeps round the southern end of the hill and joins the Kidron at En-Rogel. These two ravines form the great physical boundaries and barriers of Jerusalem; they completely cut it off from the surrounding table-land; and they isolate the hills on which it stands, and those other hills, too, or hill-tops, which as the Psalmist tells us, "are round about Jerusalem" (cxxv. 2). These natural barriers also served to confine the city within regular and definite limits—to prevent it from sending forth straggling suburbs and offshoots as most other cities do; hence it was said, "Jerusalem is builded as a city *that is compact together*" (Ps. cxxii. 3).

A high battlemented wall encompasses the modern city. It runs for half a mile along the brow of the Kidron valley, facing Olivet, then turns at right angles and zigzags across Moriah, the Tyropean, and Zion to the brow of Hinnom. The whole circuit is two miles and a half. The city was always fortified, and the walls and towers formed its most prominent features. Hence the language of the exulting Psalmist, "Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell

the towers thereof, mark ye well her bulwarks." Jerusalem has no suburbs. There is no shading off of the city into the country—long streets radiating from a centre, then straggling houses, and villas, and gardens, such as we are accustomed to see in English towns. The moment you pass the gates of Jerusalem you are in the country—a country open, bare, without a single house, and almost desolate. Not a green spot is visible, and not a tree, save here and there a little clump of gnarled, dusky olives. Rounded hill-tops, and long reaches of plain, strewn with heaps of grey limestone, extend from the walls far away to the north and south. There is no grandeur, beauty, or richness in the scenery. It is bleak and featureless. Hence the sad disappointment felt by most travellers on approaching Jerusalem from the west and north. They can only see the serried line of grey Saracenic walls extending across a section of a bleak, rocky plateau. But when I stood that morning on the brow of Olivet, and looked down on the city, crowning those battlemented heights, encircled by those deep and dark ravines, I involuntarily exclaimed,—"*Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, the city of the great King*" (Ps. xlviii. 2). And as I gazed, the red rays of the rising sun shed a halo round the top of the Castle of David; then they tipped with gold each tapering minaret, and gilt each dome of mosque and church; and at length bathed in one flood of ruddy light the terraced roofs of the city, and the grass and foliage, the cupolas, pavements, and colossal walls of the Haram.—No human being could be disappointed who first saw Jerusalem from Olivet.

WALKS THROUGH THE CITY.

In the eastern wall there is but one gate, and all the paths from Olivet and Bethany meet there. Instead of entering, however, we turn to the left, and soon reach the square tower on the north-east angle of the Haram. The

enormous size of the stones in the lower courses of the masonry—some of them being more than twenty feet long—and the moulding of their edges, prove that the building was founded not later than the time of Herod, and probably much earlier. It was one of the external defences of the fortress of Antonia, where the Roman garrison was quartered, and in which was Pilate's "Judgment Hall" where our Lord was condemned (Matt. xxvii. 19).

Proceeding southwards, we reach an ancient gate, which, though now walled up, is the most striking object on this side of the city. Travellers usually call it "The Golden Gate;" but its florid capitals and entablatures, and its debased Corinthian columns and pilasters are not older than the fourth century; and, consequently, it cannot be reckoned one of the gates of the temple.

The Valley of Judgment — Muslem tradition. — After passing the gate, my companion directed my attention to the end of a granite column projecting from the wall far overhead, to which the Mohammedans have attached a curious tradition. On it, they say, their Prophet will sit on the last day to direct the work of the final judgment in the valley beneath. That part of the tradition which locates the judgment in the Kidron, or "Valley of Jehoshaphat," they have borrowed from the Jews, and it has its origin in a misinterpretation of Joel iii. 12. But be this as it may, the belief exercises a powerful influence alike on Jews and Mohammedans. The favourite burying-place of the latter is the narrow ledge outside the Haram wall, on the brow of the Kidron; and the Jews often travel from the ends of the earth that they may lay their bones in the vast cemetry which covers the opposite bank of the ravine.

The Pinnacle of the Temple.—The south-eastern angle of the Haram is a most interesting relic of ancient Jerusalem. It is nearly eighty feet high. In its lower part are sixteen courses of bevelled stones, forming one of the finest specimens of masonry in the world. The joints are so

close, and the finish of the moulding so perfect, that when new it must have produced the effect of relievo panelling. On looking at this noble work, the narrative in Mark xiii. assumed a fresh interest for me:—"And as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples saith unto Him, Master, *See what manner of stones and what buildings are here.*" The "chief corner-stones" surpass all the others in size and finish. They measure twenty feet by six, and are designed alike for strength and beauty. How graphic must the words of Isaiah have been to the old Jews who frequented the temple courts, and were familiar with these colossal stones! "Behold I lay in Zion *for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation*" (xxviii. 16); and how beautifully expressive is the language of the Psalmist!—"Our daughters as *corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace*" (cxliv. 12).

The angle springs from the very brow of the valley; and upon its summit stood, in Herod's time, a splendid tower, uniting the royal cloisters which ran along the southern side of the temple court, to the cloisters or "porch" of Solomon (John x. 23), which occupied the eastern side. Josephus thus describes the stupendous height of this tower:—"If any one looked down from the top of the battlements, or down both those altitudes, he would be giddy, while his sight could not reach to such an immense depth." There can be little doubt that this was "the pinnacle of the temple" on which Satan placed our Lord in the temptation (Matt. iv.)

Turning the corner, we walked on to the place where the modern city wall meets the ancient Haram wall at right angles; and just at the point of junction we observed part of an old gateway. We examined it in passing; but at a subsequent period I was enabled to explore it thoroughly inside and out. The gate is double, and formerly opened into a long tunnelled passage, leading up by an inclined plane and steps to the centre of the Haram. It was

evidently intended for the accommodation of the inhabitants of the lower part of the city; probably for the Nethinims and others who lived down in Ophel, to give them easy access to the temple (Neh. iii. 26; xi. 21).

Solomon's "Ascent" to the Temple.—There is no gate in the city wall near the Haram, and we must, consequently, pass round towards Zion to a little postern which is usually open upon Fridays. Entering by it, we suddenly find ourselves in a wilderness of ruins and rubbish heaps, overgrown with rank weeds and straggling jungles of the giant cactus. The shattered and half-ruinous houses of the Jewish quarter are away up on the left, clinging to the precipitous side of Zion. A tortuous path, encumbered with filth, and noisome with the putrid remains of cats, dogs, camels, and other animals, winds through this scene of desolation. As we pass along, we cannot but recall the words of Micah, for his prediction is fulfilled before our eyes:—"Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and *Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest*" (iii. 12). At length we reach the south-west angle of the Haram, and feel amply repaid for a toilsome and unpleasant walk. The masonry here is even grander than that of the other angle, and the "corner-stones" are still more colossal; one measures thirty feet by six and a half! This angle stands on the brow of the Tyropean valley, which separated Moriah from Zion, but which is now in a great measure filled up with rubbish.

Some forty feet from the angle, on the western side, are three courses of colossal masonry projecting from the wall, and forming the springing stones of a large *arch*. These stones have within the last few years attracted no little attention, and given rise to no small amount of controversy. And this is not strange, for they are unquestionably a remnant of the bridge that once connected Moriah and Zion. Calculating by the curve of the part which remains, we find

that the span of the arch must have been about forty feet, and five such arches would be required to cross the Tyropean. That the bridge existed in our Lord's time we learn from Josephus. It is also mentioned during the siege by Pompey twenty years before Herod was made king. The exact date of the fragment still remaining, cannot, of course, be precisely fixed. One thing, however, is certain, that it is coeval with the massive foundations of the southern angles of the Haram. One of the three courses is five feet four inches high, the others are a little less. One of the stones is twenty-four feet long, another twenty, and the rest in proportion. The Cyclopean dimensions, and peculiar character of the masonry, indicate a far higher antiquity than Herod the Great, and would seem to point back to the earliest age of the Jewish monarchy. We read in 1 Kings vii. 10, that the foundations of Solomon's temple were formed of "*costly stones, even great stones; stones of ten cubits, and stones of eight cubits .... And the great court round about was with three rows of hewed stones.*" In three passages of Scripture a remarkable "*ascent*," or "*causeway*," is mentioned, leading from the palace to the temple, and specially intended for the use of the king (1 Kings x. 5; 1 Chron. xxvi. 16; 2 Chron. ix. 4). May we not identify this "ascent" with the "viaduct" which, according to Josephus, connected the royal palace on Zion with the temple court? Such a monument of genius and power might well make a deep impression on the mind of the Queen of Sheba in that remote age; and thus a new interest is attached to the story:—"And when the Queen of Sheba had seen the wisdom of Solomon, and the house he had built, . . . *and his ascent by which he went up into the house of the Lord, there was no more spirit in her.*"

What a train of associations, holy and historic, and what a crowd of feelings, joyous and sorrowful, do these few stones awaken! Over the noble bridge which they supported, marched in solemn splendour the kings and princes

of Israel, to worship God in His temple. Over it, too, humble and despised, often passed the Son of God himself, to carry a message of heavenly peace to a rebel world. Upon its shattered arch the victorious Titus once stood, and pointing to the burning temple behind him, made a final appeal to the remnant of the Jews on Zion to lay down their arms and save themselves from slaughter by submission to Rome. Now, temple, bridge, and palace are all gone. Within the precincts of the temple-court no Jew dare set his foot; and on the site of the royal palace the wretched dwellings of that poor despised race are huddled together in misery and in squalor.

The Place of Wailing.—Entering the inhabited part of the old city, and winding through some crooked filthy lanes, I suddenly found myself, on turning a sharp corner, in a spot of singular interest;—the "Jew's place of wailing." It is a small paved quadrangle; on one side are the backs of low modern houses, without door or window; on the other is the lofty wall of the Haram, of recent date above, but having below five courses of bevelled stones in a perfect state of preservation. Here the Jews are permitted to approach the sacred enclosure, and wail over the fallen temple, whose very dust is dear to them, and in whose stones they still take pleasure (Ps. cii. 14). It was Friday, and a crowd of miserable devotees had assembled—men and women of all ages and all nations, dressed in the quaint costumes of every country of Europe and Asia. Old men were there,—pale, haggard, careworn men, tottering on pilgrim staves; and little girls with white faces, and lustrous black eyes, gazing wistfully now at their parents, now at the old wall. Some were on their knees, chanting mournfully from a book of Hebrew prayers, swaying their bodies to and fro; some were prostrate on the ground, pressing forehead and lips to the earth; some were close to the wall, burying their faces in the rents and crannies of the old stones; some were kissing them, some had their

arms spread out as if they would clasp them to their bosoms, some were bathing them with tears, and all the while sobbing as if their hearts would burst. It was a sad and touching spectacle. Eighteen centuries of exile and woe have not dulled their hearts' affections, or deadened their feelings of national devotion. Here we see them assembled from the ends of the earth, poor, despised, down-trodden outcasts,—amid the desolations of their fatherland, beside the dishonoured ruins of their ancient sanctuary,—chanting, now in accents of deep pathos, and now of wild woe, the prophetic words of their own Psalmist,—"*O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled. . . . We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us. How long, Lord? Wilt thou be angry for ever?*" (Ps. lxxix. 1, 4, 5).

> "Oh, weep for those that wept by Babel's stream,
> Whose shrines are desolate, whose land a dream;
> Weep for the harp of Judah's broken shell;
> Mourn—where their God hath dwelt, the godless dwell!"

The Temple and its Court.—After two or three attempts to get a peep at the sacred enclosure through the open gateways, where we met with a somewhat rude reception from the guardian dervishes, we passed on to the Serai, or Pasha's palace, at the north-west corner. My companion had the entrée, and we were soon on the terraced roof which commands the whole Haram. From this point the various buildings are seen to great advantage. I was struck with the chasteness of design, and wonderful minuteness and delicacy of detail, in the Saracenic architecture. The central mosque is a perfect gem. The encaustic tiles which cover the whole exterior, reflect in gorgeous hues the bright sunlight. Over the windows and round the cornice are borders of beautifully interlaced Arabic characters, so large that one can easily read them. The graceful dome and its golden crescent crown the whole. The position of

the building on its marble platform, raised high above the surrounding area, adds vastly to its appearance. It is octagonal in form, and about one hundred and sixty feet in diameter. The roof and dome are supported by three concentric circles of marble columns of the Corinthian order. Beneath the dome is the remarkable *rock*,—the *sanctum* of the whole Haram,—which gives to the building its name, *Kubbet es-Sukhrah*, "The Dome of the Rock." It is the top of the hill,—the crown of Mount Moriah, rough and irregular in form, and rising five or six feet above the marble floor. Beneath it is a small excavated chamber, called the "Noble Cave." The Jews regard this rock as the holiest spot on earth. Here, they tell us, Abraham offered his sacrifice; here was the threshing-floor of Ornan which David bought, and on which Solomon built the Temple (2 Sam. xxiv.; 1 Chron. xxi.; 1 Kings vi.; 2 Chron. iii.) We learn from the Talmud that the great altar of burnt-offering was erected on it, and that the cave beneath was excavated as a cesspool to drain off the blood. Thus the exact site of Solomon's Temple is identified; and thus, too, we see that the golden crescent—the symbol of the false prophet—is now raised on high, as if in scorn and derision, over the very spot where the Shekinah glory appeared of old. Ezekiel's prophecy is fulfilled, "*I will bring the worst of the heathen, and they shall possess their houses. . . . . And their holy places shall be defiled*" (vii. 24).

The poor Jew may now truly exclaim, as he looks down from his squalid dwelling on the brow of Zion:—

> "Our temple hath not left one stone,
> And mockery sits on Salem's throne."

The whole Haram area is artificial. Part of it round the great mosque has been cut down, while the outer portions are raised, and the southern section is supported on massive piers and arches. The subterranean chambers thus formed are chiefly used as cisterns for storing water.

In former times they were supplied by an aqueduct from Solomon's Pools.

The other buildings in the Haram have comparatively little interest. On the right, adjoining the city, are ranges of Dervish colleges, with cloisters opening on the grassy area. Away on the south-west is El-Aksa, with its pointed roof and Gothic façade. To the left of the great mosque, and only a few paces distant, is a beautiful cupola, supported on slender marble columns; it was built by the Calif Abd el-Melek, some say as a model for the Dome of the Rock.

Via Dolorosa.—A narrow lane which runs in a zig-zag line from the door of the Serai to the Church of the Sepulchre has been dignified by the name *Via Dolorosa*, because along it, says tradition, our Lord passed from the Judgment Hall to Calvary. I shall neither insult the understandings of my readers, nor shock their feelings by any description of the Seven *Stations*, which monkish imposture has located here. We passed along the street, making various excursions to the right and left in order to get a fuller view of the city, and to visit objects of interest. We looked into the Pool of Bethesda, so called,—but which seems to be a portion of the great fosse which protected the fortress of Antonia on the north; and we visited the Church of St. Anne, not far distant,—a chaste building of the Crusading age, recently given by the Sultan to the French Emperor. "Most of the city is very solitary and silent; echo answers to your tread; frequent waste places, among which the wild dog prowls, convey an indescribable mpression of desolation; and it is not only these waste places that give such an air of loneliness to the city, but many of the streets themselves, dark, dull, and mournful looking, seem as if the Templars' armed tread were the last to which they had resounded." Another thing strikes the thoughtful traveller,—the remains of the ancient city that meet the eye are singularly few; here and there, a

column in the wall, or a marble slab on the footway, or a fragment of bevelled masonry, or a Gothic arch projecting from a rubbish heap,—these are all that whisper memories of the distant past. The Jerusalem of Solomon, and the Jerusalem of Herod, and even a great part of the Jerusalem of the Crusades, lie deeply buried beneath the modern lanes and houses.

THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE

Has been for fifteen hundred years the chief point of attraction to Christian pilgrims. Its history may be told in a sentence or two. Founded by the Emperor Constantine, it was dedicated in A.D. 335—Eusebius, the father of ecclesiastical history, taking part in the consecration service. It was destroyed by the Persians in 614, and rebuilt sixteen years afterwards on a new plan. It was again destroyed by the mad Calif Hâkim, the founder of the Druse sect, and rebuilt in 1048. During the Crusades many changes and additions were made. The Rotunda, the Greek Church on its eastern side, the western façade, including the present door and tower, and the chapel over Calvary, were then erected in whole or in part. The buildings remained as the Crusaders left them till the year 1808, when they were partly destroyed by fire. They were restored, and the church, as it now stands, was consecrated in 1810.

Turning from the Via Dolorosa into a narrow lane, we soon reach an open court, its pavement worn by the feet of innumerable pilgrims, and usually littered with the wares of trinket merchants, dealers in beads, crosses, "holy" soap, and "blessed" candles, which are eagerly bought up by strangers. On the northern side of the court stands the church. Its southern façade, the only one now uncovered, is a pointed Romanesque composition, dark, heavy, and yet picturesque. It has a wide double door, with detached shafts supporting richly sculptured architraves, representing our Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Over the

door are two corresponding windows, and on the left stands the remnant of the massive Campanile, once a noble tower of five stories, but now cut down to three.

On entering, it was with shame and sorrow I observed a guard of soldiers—Mohammedan soldiers—stationed in the vestibule, to keep rival Christian sects from quarreling over the tomb of their Saviour. The principal part of the building is the *Rotunda*, which has a dome open at the top, like the Pantheon. Beneath the dome stands the *Holy Sepulchre*, a little structure, like a church in miniature, encased in white stone profusely ornamented, and surmounted by a crown-shaped cupola. It contains two small chambers—the first called the "Chapel of the Angel," and said to be the place where the angel sat after he had rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulchre. The stone itself is there too! Through this we pass, and enter the *Sepulchre* by a very low door. It is a vault, measuring six feet by seven. The tomb—a raised couch covered with a slab of white marble—occupies the whole of the right side. Over it hang forty lamps of gold and silver, kept constantly burning. I lingered long here—solemnized, almost awe-stricken—looking at pilgrim after pilgrim, in endless succession, crawling in on bended knees, putting lips and forehead and cheeks to the cold marble, bathing it with tears, then dragging himself away backwards, still in the attitude of devotion, until the threshold is again crossed. The vault *is said* to be hewn out of the rock, but not a vestige of rock is now visible; the floor, tomb, walls, are all marble. The rock *may* be there; but if so, how one should wish

"The lichen now were free to twine
O'er the dark entrance of that rock-hewn cell.
Say, should we miss the gold-encrusted shrine
Or incense-fume's intoxicating spell?"

The Rotunda and Sepulchre are common property. All sects — Latin, Greek, Armenian, Coptic, Jacobite — have free access to them, but each has its own establishment

elsewhere. Round the Holy Sepulchre are numerous other "holy places," no less than *thirty-two* being clustered under one roof! Golgotha, the Stone of Unction, the Place of Apparition, the Chapel of Mocking, the Chapel of the Invention of the Cross——But why go over such a catalogue? I would not willingly mingle one light feeling or one light expression with the solemn events of the Crucifixion. Yet it is difficult to speak of these "holy places" gravely. It is difficult to forget how seriously such superstitions and traditions hinder the success of missionary enterprise, and how often they make Christianity a mockery in the land which gave it birth.

On another occasion, I was in the Church of the Sepulchre at Easter, when crowded with pilgrims from all lands, of all sects. It was a strange and impressive, but painful scene. In that vast crowd, with the exception of a few solitary cases, I saw nothing like devotion; and in these few cases devotional feeling had manifestly degenerated into superstition. *Place* was the object of worship, and not *God.* The bitter animosities of rival sects came out on all sides, among the clergy as well as their flocks; and it was only the presence of the Turkish guard that prevented open war. I was then glad to think that the *real* place of our Lord's Passion was not dishonoured. True, Christianity is a spiritual faith; it recognizes no "holy places." Yet one's natural feelings revolt at the bare idea of Calvary becoming the scene and the cause of superstition and strife.

But some of my readers will doubtless ask, "Does not the Church of the Sepulchre cover the *real* tomb of our Lord?" The question involves a long and tangled controversy, on which I care not to enter. I may, however, give my own first impressions on the subject—impressions which thought and study have since deepened into conviction. Before visiting Jerusalem, I knew from Scripture that Christ was crucified "without the gate" (Heb. xiii. 12), at a place called Golgotha (Matt. xxvii. 33), apparently beside a

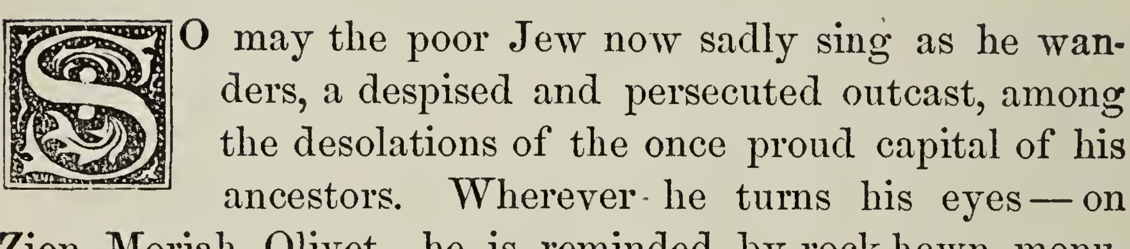
public road (v. 39). I also knew that the "sepulchre" was "hewn out of a rock" (Mark xv. 46), in a garden near Golgotha (John xix. 41, 42). On visiting Jerusalem, I was not a little surprised to observe the dome of the Church of the Sepulchre far *within* the walls—in fact, *nearly in the centre of the city.* Yet the city in our Lord's day must have been four or five times larger than it is now. It seemed to me that topography alone makes identity all but impossible. But whatever may be thought of traditional "holy places," Zion and Moriah, Hinnom, Olivet, and the Kidron are there. What though the royal palace has become "heaps," and the temple has "not one stone left upon another!" What though the "Holy City" is "trodden down of the Gentiles," and mockery is enshrined in its sanctuary! The glens which echoed back the monarch minstrel's song, the sacred court within whose colossal walls Israel assembled to worship a present God, the hills over which Jesus walked, and on whose sides He taught and prayed, the vines, the figs, the olives which suggested His beautiful parables,—all are there; and no controversies or scandals can ever change their features, or rob us of the hallowed memories they recall and the illustrations of divine truth they afford.



II.

The Tombs of the Holy City.

> "But we must wander witheringly
> In other lands to die;
> And where our fathers' ashes be,
> Our own may never lie."



SO may the poor Jew now sadly sing as he wanders, a despised and persecuted outcast, among the desolations of the once proud capital of his ancestors. Wherever he turns his eyes — on Zion, Moriah, Olivet—he is reminded by rock-hewn monument and yawning cave, that Jerusalem is not only his holy city, but that the ashes of his ancestors are there; that it is, as the captive said in Babylon, "the place of my fathers' sepulchres" (Neh. ii. 3). The tombs are among the most interesting monuments of Jerusalem. The temple "hath not left one stone;" the palaces of Solomon and Herod have long since crumbled to dust; the Jerusalem of the prophets and apostles "became heaps" (Jer. ix. 11) centuries ago, but the tombs remain almost as perfect as when the princes of Israel were there laid "in glory, every one in his own house" (Isa. xiv. 18). I was sadly disappointed when, after days and weeks of careful and toilsome research, I could only discover a very few authentic vestiges of "the city of the Great King;" — a few fragments of the colossal wall that enclosed the temple courts; a few broken shafts here and there in the lanes, or protruding from some noisome rubbish heap; a few remnants of the fortifications that once

defended Zion. All besides is gone; buried deep, deep beneath modern dwellings.

When excavating for the foundation of the English Church, portions of the old houses and aqueducts of Zion were found nearly forty feet below the present surface! We need not wonder that the identification of the particular buildings of primitive ages is now so difficult; and that even the position of the valleys which once divided the quarters of the city, has come to be subject of keen controversy among antiquarians. The city of Herod was built on the ruins of the city of Solomon; the city of the Crusaders was built on the ruins of that of Herod; and modern Jerusalem is founded on the ruins of them all. Hills and cliffs have been rounded off; ravines have been filled up; palaces and fortresses have been overthrown, and their very ruins have been covered over with the rubbish of millenniums. Could David revisit his royal capital, or could Herod come back to the scene of his magnificence and his crimes, or could Godfrey rise from his tomb, so complete has been the desolation, so great the change even in the features of the site, that I believe they would find as much difficulty in settling topographical details as modern scholars do.

Nothing but excavation can settle satisfactorily and finally the vexed questions of Jerusalem's topography. A week's work in trenches would do more to solve existing mysteries than scores of volumes and years of learned research. It may well excite the wonder of Biblical scholars, that while the mounds of Assyria, and Babylonia, and Chaldea, have been excavated at enormous cost, not a shilling has been expended upon the Holy City. By judicious excavation, under the direction of an accomplished antiquarian, the lines of the ancient walls, the sites of the great buildings, the sepulchres of the kings, and the beds of the valleys, might all be traced. A flood of light would thus be shed upon one of the most interesting departments

of Biblical topography; and who can tell what precious treasures of ancient art might be discovered? Will no man of influence and wealth in our country undertake this work? Will no learned society contribute of its funds to carry it out? Will not our beloved Prince, who has already rendered such signal service at Hebron, render a still greater service to Biblical knowledge, by encouraging such an enterprise?

It is pleasant to think that amid ruin and confusion there are still some monuments left in and around the Holy City, as connecting links between the present and the distant past. The sepulchres of the Jewish nobles remain though their palaces are gone. We can see where they were buried, if we cannot see where they lived. I could not describe with what intense emotion I heard my friends speak familiarly of the tombs of David and Absalom, of the Judges, the kings, and the prophets; and what was the excited state of my feelings when they proposed one bright morning a walk to Tophet and Aceldama. Some of these names may be, and doubtless are, apocryphal; none of them may be able to stand the test of full historic investigation; but the high antiquity of the monuments themselves cannot be denied; and an inspection of them is alike interesting and instructive, from the light they throw upon the customs of God's ancient people, and from the illustrations they afford of many passages in God's Word.

JEWISH TOMBS.

The earliest burial-places on record were caves. When Sarah died, Abraham bought the cave of Machpelah, and buried her there. Samuel is said to have been buried "in *his house* at Ramah" (1 Sam. xxv. 1); by which, I believe, is meant *the tomb* he had excavated for himself there, for the Hebrew word *Beth*, "house," is sometimes used to signify tomb, as in Isaiah xiv. 18, and Eccles. xii. 5, "Man goeth to his *long home*," literally "to his *eternal house*."

We read, moreover, of King Asa, that "they buried him in his own sepulchre *which he had digged for himself* in the city of David" (2 Chron. xvi. 14). Elisha was buried in a *cave* (2 Kings xiii. 21); the sepulchre of Lazarus was a *cave* (John xi. 38); and the Holy Sepulchre was a *new cave* which Joseph of Arimathea had "hewn out in the rock" for himself (Matt. xxvii. 60).

In our own land we are all familiar with the grassy mounds and marble monuments which fill the cemeteries, and which pass away almost as quickly as man himself. In Rome and Pompeii we see the habitations of the dead lining the great highways, and crumbling to ruin like the palaces of their tenants. But the moment we set our feet on the shores of Palestine, we feel that we are in an ancient country—the home of a primeval people, whose tombs appear in cliff and glen, and mountain-side, all hewn in the living rock, and permanent as the rock itself. The tombs of Jerusalem are rock-hewn caves. I found them in every direction. Wherever the face of a crag affords space for an architectural façade, or a projecting rock a fitting place for excavation, there is sure to be a sepulchre. I visited them on Olivet and Scopus, on Zion and Moriah, inside the modern city and outside; but they chiefly abound in the rocky banks of Hinnom and the Kidron. Near the junction of these ravines, the overhanging cliffs are actually honeycombed. Hundreds of dark openings were in view when I stood beside En-Rogel. Some of these tombs are small grottoes, with only one or two receptacles for bodies; others are of great extent, containing chambers, galleries, passages, and *loculi*, almost without number, each tomb forming a little necropolis. The doors are low and narrow, so as to be shut by a single slab. This slab was called *golal*, that is, "a thing rolled," from the fact that it was rolled back from the opening in a groove made for it. The stone being heavy, and the groove generally inclining upwards, the operation of opening required a considerable exertion of

strength. Hence the anxious inquiry of the two Marys, "Who shall *roll* us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" (Mark xvi. 3). The stone always fitted closely, and could easily be sealed with one of those large signets such as were then in use. Or perhaps the Holy Sepulchre may have had a wedge, or small bar, pushed into the rock behind it, like that at the tombs of the kings (described below), and preventing the stone from being rolled back. To this the seal might be attached (Matt. xxvii. 66). I had always to stoop low on entering the doors, which reminded me of Peter at the sepulchre (Luke xxiv. 12). The façades of many are elaborately ornamented; but one thing is very remarkable, they contain no inscriptions. The tombs of Egypt are covered with hieroglyphics, giving long histories of the dead, and of the honours paid to their remains. The tombs of Palmyra not only have written tablets over the entrances; but every separate niche, or *loculus* in the interior has its inscription. I have counted more than fifty such in a single mausoleum; yet I have never been able to discover a single letter in one of the tombs of the Holy City, nor a single painting, sculpture, or carving on any *ancient* Jewish tomb in Palestine, calculated to throw light on the story, name, or rank of the dead.

Simplicity and security appear to have been the only things the Jews aimed at in the construction of their sepulchres. To be buried with their fathers was their only ambition. They seem to have had no desire to transmit their names to posterity through the agency of their graves. It has been well said that the words, "Let me bury my dead out of my sight," "No man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day"—express, if not the general feeling of the Jewish nation, at least the general spirit of the Old Testament. With the Jews the tomb was an unclean place, which men endeavoured to avoid rather than honour by pilgrimages. The homage paid to them is of late date, and

the offspring of a corrupt age. When near relatives died it was, as it still is, customary for females to go and weep at their graves, as Martha and Mary did at the grave of Lazarus; but the dead were soon forgotten, and except in the case of a few of the patriarchs, kings (Acts vii. 16, ii. 29), and prophets (Matt. xxiii. 29) we have no record of tombs having been even held in remembrance.

There were always a few in every age who coveted outward show and splendour in their tombs, as well as in their houses. Such was the upstart Shebna, whose vanity and pretension the prophet Isaiah describes and denounces: "What hast thou here, and whom hast thou here, that thou hast hewed thee out a sepulchre here, as he that heweth him out a sepulchre on high, that graveth an habitation for himself in a rock?" (xxii. 16.) It is evident that the greater part of the ornamented façades, and architectural tombs, are of a late date, and not purely Jewish.

JEWISH MODE OF BURIAL.

The Jews used no coffins or sarcophagi. The body was washed (Acts ix. 37), anointed (Mark xvi. 1; John xix. 40), wrapped in linen cloths (John xix. 40; xi. 44), and laid in the niche prepared for it—an excavation about two feet wide, three high, and six deep, opening endwise in the side of the rock-chamber, as is represented in the diagrams given below. The mouth of the loculus was then shut by a slab of stone, and sealed with cement. In some cases the bodies were laid on a kind of open shelf, such as I have seen in many of the chambers. It was thus our Lord was laid, for John tells us that Mary "stooped down into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels, *the one at the head and the other at the feet*, where the body of Jesus had lain" (xx. 21).

The kings of Israel were buried with more pomp. In addition to the anointing of the sweet spices, "burnings" were made for them. Thus Jeremiah says to Zedekiah: "Thou shalt die in peace; and with the *burnings of thy*

fathers, the former kings which were before thee, so shall they *burn* for thee." And in the case of Asa we are told there was "a great burning" (2 Chron. xvi. 14). It is not meant that the bodies were burned, but that sweet spices and perfumes were burned in honour of them, and probably in their sepulchres. The bodies of Saul and Jonathan are the only ones which we read of as having been burned (1 Sam. xxxi. 11–13).

THE TOMB OF DAVID.

On the southern brow of Zion, outside the modern walls, there is a little group of buildings distinguished from afar by a dome and lofty minaret. These, according to an old tradition, believed in alike by Jews, Christians, and Mohammedans, cover the sepulchre of Israel's minstrel king. As matters now stand the truth of the tradition can neither be proved nor disproved. The Turks esteem the spot one of their very holiest shrines, and they will neither examine it themselves nor permit others to do so. No place about Jerusalem, not even the Haram, is guarded with such jealousy. I visited the building frequently: I walked round and through it: I peeped into every hole, window, and passage accessible to me: I tried soft words and even a liberal *bakhshish* with the gentlemanly old keeper: but it was all in vain; I saw no more than my predecessors had done.

The principal apartment in the group of buildings is a Gothic chamber, evidently a Christian church of the crusading age, though probably built on an older site, or perhaps reconstructed out of an earlier model. Tradition has filled it with "holy places," making it the scene of the Last Supper (hence its name *Coenaculum*), of the meeting after the Resurrection, of the miracle of Pentecost, of the residence and death of the Virgin, and of the burial of Stephen. At its eastern end is a little chancel where Romish priests sometimes celebrate mass; and on the south side is a *mih-*

rab where Moslems pray. It is thus a grand centre of tradition, superstition, and imposture.

The crypt is the real holy place. A portion of it has been walled off and consecrated as a mosque-mausoleum. So sacred is it, that none have the *entrée*, not even Muslem santons or grandees — except the sheikh who keeps it, and the members of his family. Fürer, a German traveller of the sixteenth century, tells us he gained access to it, and he probably saw the interior. In 1839 Sir Moses Montefiore was permitted to approach an iron railing and look into the chamber which contains the tomb; but he could not enter. The Jew is shut out alike from the Temple and tombs of his fathers.

Miss Barclay, a young American lady, (daughter of the author of "The City of the Great King,") has been more fortunate. She gained admission to the mausoleum with a female friend, a near relative of the keeper; she spent an hour in the sanctuary, took a sketch of the interior, and has given us the following description of what she saw: "The room is insignificant in its dimensions, but is furnished very gorgeously. The tomb is apparently an immense sarcophagus of rough stone, and is covered by green satin tapestry, richly embroidered with gold. A satin canopy of red, blue, green, and yellow stripes hangs over the tomb; and another piece of black velvet tapestry, embroidered in silver, *covers a door in one end of the room which, they said, leads to a cave underneath.* Two tall silver candlesticks stand before this door, and a little lamp hangs in a window near it, which is kept constantly burning. . . . . The ceiling of the room is vaulted, and the walls covered with blue porcelain in floral figures."

Such then is the present state of the reputed tomb of David. It is well known, however, that the Muslems carefully shut up their most sacred shrines, and construct others either directly over them or close beside them, which they visit and venerate as the real places. So it is at the tomb

of Abraham in Hebron, and so, doubtless, it is here. The real sepulchre, if here at all, is in a vault beneath, and the door mentioned by Miss Barclay probably leads to it. No fact in the Word of God is more plainly stated than this, that David, and most of his successors on the throne of Israel, were buried in the "city of David," that is, in Zion (1 Kings ii. 10; xi. 43; xv. 24, &c.) The royal sepulchres were well known after the return of the Jews from Babylon, and Nehemiah incidentally describes their position (iii. 15, 16). Josephus says that Solomon buried David with great pomp, and placed immense treasures in his tomb. These remained undisturbed until Hyrcanus, when besieged by Antiochus, opened one room and took out three thousand talents to buy off the enemy. Herod the Great also plundered the tomb; and it is said that two of his guards were killed by a flame that burst upon them when engaged in the sacrilegious act. We have a still later testimony to the preservation of the tomb in the words of the apostle Peter regarding David: "His sepulchre is with us unto this day" (Acts ii. 29). We hear no more of it till the 12th century, when Benjamin of Tudela relates the following strange story, which I insert as perhaps having some slight foundation in fact:—

"On Mount Zion are the sepulchres of the house of David. In consequence of the following circumstance, this place is hardly to be recognised. Fifteen years ago one of the walls of the church on Zion fell down, and the patriarch ordered the priest to repair it, and to take the stones requisite from the old wall of Zion. . . . . Two labourers when thus employed, found a stone which covered the mouth of a cave. This they entered in search of treasures, and reached a large hall, supported by pillars of marble, encrusted with gold and silver, and before which stood a table with a golden sceptre and crown. This was the sepulchre of David; to the left they saw that of Solomon in a similar state; and so on the sepulchres of the other kings buried

there. They saw chests locked up, and were on the point of entering when a blast of wind rushing out threw them lifeless on the ground. They lay there senseless until evening, and then they heard a voice commanding them to go forth from the place. The patriarch on hearing the story ordered the tomb to be walled up." The royal sepulchres were doubtless hewn in the rock, like all those of great men in that age; and they must still exist. Excavation, or at least a full exploration of the place, will alone solve the mystery. Of one thing we may be assured, that the sepulchre of David cannot have been far distant from the building now said to stand over it.

TOPHET.

On one occasion, after a long visit to Zion, I walked down through the terraced corn-fields on its southern declivity into the deep glen of Hinnom. The sun was low in the west, and the ravine, with its rugged cliffs, and dusky olive groves, was thrown into deep shadow. Not a human being was there, and no sound from the city broke in upon the silence. The high rocks along the whole southern bank are honey-combed with tombs, whose dark mouths made the place look still more gloomy. Already the jackals had left their lairs, and numbers of them ran out and in of the sepulchres, and prowling among the rocks and through the olive trees. As I wandered on down Hinnom towards the Kidron I observed that the tombs became more and more numerous, until at length, at the junction of the valleys, every available spot in the surrounding cliffs and rocks was excavated. They are mostly plain chambers, or groups of chambers opening into each other, hewn in the soft limestone, without any attempt at ornament, save, here and there, a moulding round the door. I observed a few Hebrew and Greek inscriptions, but of late date—certainly not older than the ninth or tenth century.

Here, in the mouth of Hinnom, was situated the *Tophet*

of the Bible,—originally, perhaps, a "music power," or "pleasure garden" of Solomon's; but afterwards desecrated by lust, and defiled by the offerings of Baal and the fires of

> "Moloch, horrid king, besmeared with blood
> Of human sacrifice and parents' tears."

It finally became so notorious for its abominations that it was regarded as the "very type of hell;" and the name of the valley, Ge-Hinnom, in Greek *Gehenna*, was given by the Jews to the infernal regions. Jeremiah gives some terrible sketches of the fearful atrocities perpetrated in this spot in the name of religion (vii. 31); and he depicts the judgments which the Lord pronounced on the city and people on account of them (xix. 6–15). Standing on the brink of the valley I saw how literally one part of the curse had been fulfilled:—"Wherefore the days come when it shall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of Ben-Hinnom, but the valley of Slaughter; *for they shall bury in Tophet till there be no place*" (vii. 32). And as I returned that evening up the Kidron to my home on Olivet, I saw what seemed to me another terrible illustration of the outpouring of the curse. I saw hyenas, jackals, and vultures tearing the corpses from the shallow graves in the modern Jewish cemetery. With what harrowing vividness did the prophet's dire prediction then flash upon my mind:—"*Their carcases will I give to be meat for the fowls of heaven, and for the beasts of the earth.* And I will make this city desolate, and an hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished and hiss, because of all the plagues thereof" (xix. 7, 8).

ACELDAMA.

On another occasion I went to the necropolis of Tophet with a double purpose,—to explore the rock tombs more thoroughly, and to see the painting of the Valley of Jehoshaphat, which the lamented Mr. Seddon was just then completing. He had pitched his little tent at the door of

an old sepulchre on the brow of the hill; and as we approached an armed goat-herd was before him, whom he was working into the foreground. I was equally delighted and surprised at the boldness of design, the faithfulness of colouring, and the scrupulous accuracy of detail in that admirable picture. He kindly left his work, and walked away with us to Aceldama. Another artist was of our party, whose brilliant genius was then reproducing, with all the vividness and faithfulness of reality, the scene of THE FINDING OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE. That day will ever remain as one of the sunny spots on memory's clouded landscape.

Tomb after tomb we passed and explored, lighting up their gloomy chambers and narrow *loculi* with our torches, and wondering at the endless variety and numbers of these homes of the forgotten dead. At length we reached a narrow ledge or terrace, on the steep bank, directly facing the pool of Siloam. Here was a large square edifice, half excavated in the living rock, half built of massive masonry. Looking in through a rent in the wall, we found that it was a vast charnel house, some twenty feet deep, the bottom covered with dust and mouldering bones. This is ACELDAMA, "the field of blood;" bought with the "thirty pieces of silver, the price of Him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value" (Matt. xxvii. 9). The tradition which identifies it is at least as old as the fourth century; and it is a remarkable fact that the peculiar clay on the adjoining terraces would seem to show that this had once been a "potter's field:"—"They took counsel, and bought with them the *potter's field* to bury strangers in" (ver. 7.)

SILOAM.

I had often been struck with the quaint and picturesque appearance of the little hamlet of *Silwân*, whose houses seem to cling like swallows' nests to the gray cliffs of Oli-

vet. It takes its name from the fountain on the opposite side of the Kidron, at the base of Moriah; and it alone brings down to modern times the sacred name of "the waters of *Siloah* that flow softly" (Isa. viii. 6), and of that "pool of *Siloam*" in which our Lord commanded the blind man to wash (John ix. 7). Its inhabitants have a bad name, and are known to be lawless, fanatical vagabonds. I resolved, however, to explore their den, and I succeeded, notwithstanding repeated volleys of threats and curses, intermixed now and again with a stone or two. I was well repaid. The village stands on a necropolis; and the habitations are all half caves, half buildings,—a single room, or rude porch, being attached to the front of a rock tomb. It is a strange wild place. On every side I heard children's prattle issuing from the gloomy chambers of ancient sepulchres. Looking into one I saw an infant cradled in an old sarcophagus. The larger tombs, where the ashes of Israel's nobles once reposed, were now filled with sheep and goats, and lambs and kids gambolled merrily among the *loculi.* The steep hill-side appears to have been hewn into irregular terraces, and along these the sepulchres were excavated, one above another. They are better finished than those of Tophet; and a few of them are Egyptian in style, and may, perhaps, be of that age when Egyptian influence was strong at the court of Solomon (1 Kings vii. 8–12; xi. 7; 2 Kings xxiii. 3; 2 Chron. viii. 11.)

ABSALOM'S PILLAR.

The most picturesque group of sepulchral monuments around the Holy City is that in the valley of the Kidron, just beneath the south-east angle of the Haram. There are four tombs here in a range, which, from their position in the deep narrow glen, and from the style of their architecture, cannot fail to arrest the attention of every visitor to the Holy City. I walked up to them from Siloam. That was a sad walk. I can never forget the horrid sights I saw.

The whole side of Olivet is covered with Jewish graves. In most cases the bodies have only a few inches of loose earth thrown over them, and then a broad stone is laid on the top. All round me were revolting evidences of the carnival held nightly there by dogs, jackals, and hyenas. Vultures were enjoying a horrid banquet within a stone's throw of me; and gorged with food, they seemed fearless of my approach. Never before had the degradations to which the poor Jews must now submit been brought before my mind with such harrowing vividness:—

> "Tribes of the wandering foot and weary breast,
> How shall you flee away and be at rest?
> The wild dove hath her nest, the fox his cave,
> Mankind their country,—Israel but the grave!"

The *Tomb or Pillar of Absalom* is a cubical structure, hewn out of the rock, measuring twenty-two feet on each side, and ornamented with Ionic pilasters. It is surmounted by a circular cone of masonry, terminating in a tuft of palm leaves. In the interior is a small excavated chamber, with two niches for bodies. The architecture shows at once that this cannot be the "pillar" which Absalom had "reared up for himself during his lifetime in the king's dale" (2 Sam. xviii. 18); and indeed, his name was only attached to it about the twelfth century. It resembles some of the tombs of Petra; and may, perhaps, be the work of one of the Herods, who were of Idumean descent.

A few yards farther south is another monolithic structure, somewhat resembling the preceding, and now usually called the *Tomb of Zacharias*—that Zacharias who was stoned in the court of the Temple in the reign of Joash (2 Chron. xxiv. 21); and to whom Christ refers, as slain between the temple and the altar (Matt. xxiii. 35). But there is no evidence to connect the monument with this or any other Old Testament worthy. The Jews hold it in high veneration; and the dearest wish of their hearts is to have their bones

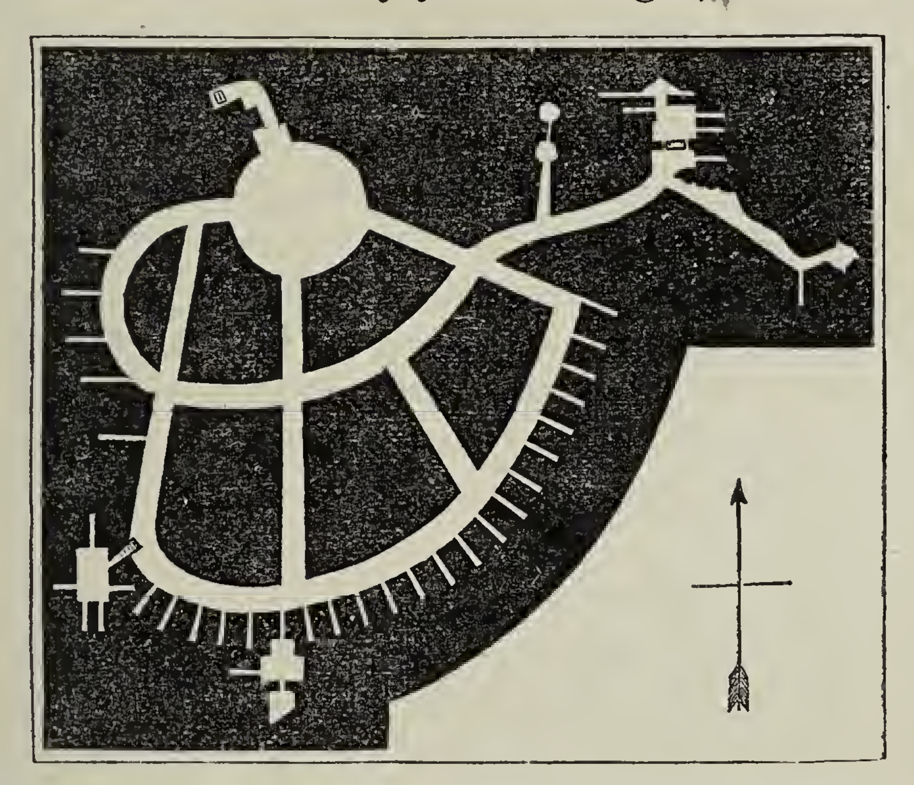
laid beside it. The whole ground around its base is crowded with graves.

Between these two monuments is a large excavated chamber in the side of the cliff, having a Doric porch supported by two columns. Within it are several spacious vaults, and numerous loculi for bodies. Here, says tradition, the Apostle James found an asylum during the interval between the crucifixion and the resurrection. The story is, of course, apocryphal, and was not attached to the tomb till about the fourteenth century. The view of the Kidron valley from this spot is singularly impressive. There is nothing like it in Palestine, or elsewhere. The valley is deep, rugged, and altogether destitute of verdure. On one side Moriah rises in banks of naked rock and bare shelving acclivities, until it is crowned, far overhead, by the colossal wall of the Haram; on the other side the limestone cliffs are hewn out into architectural façades, and stately monuments, and yawning sepulchres; while away above them, here and there, a patriarchal olive, with sparse branches and great gnarled arms, stands forsaken and desolate, like the last tree of a forest.

THE TOMBS OF THE PROPHETS.

High up on the brow of Olivet, between the footpath that leads to the Church of the Ascension and the main road to Bethany, is a very remarkable catacomb, of the most ancient Jewish type. It is now called the *Tomb of the Prophets*, though there is no inscription, or historical memorial, or even ancient tradition, to justify the name. Equipped in a "working costume," and furnished with a handful of little candles, we started early one morning to explore it. Crawling into a narrow hole in an open field, and then down a long gallery, we reached a circular vault, twenty-four feet in diameter; from it two parallel galleries, five feet wide and ten feet high, are carried through the rocks for some twenty yards; a third runs in another direc-

tion; and they are all connected by cross galleries, the outer one of which is forty yards in length, and has a range



of thirty *loculi* for bodies. The accompanying diagram will show the intricate plan and singular structure of these interesting catacombs better than any description.

TOMB OF THE VIRGIN.

In coming forth again to the light of day, which, after the darkness, seemed doubly brilliant, we descended the hill-side and paid a passing visit to the tomb of Mary. It is a quaint, but singularly picturesque structure, and must excite the admiration of every pilgrim to Gethsemane and Olivet. Grey and worn with age, deeply set among the rocky roots of the mount, shaded by venerable olive trees, it is one of those buildings which even all the absurdity of tradition cannot divest of interest. On entering the door we had a long descent by some sixty steps to the chapel, a gloomy, rugged, natural cave, partly remodelled by human hands. Here tradition has placed the empty tomb of the Virgin; and here Popery has fixed the scene of the Assumption.

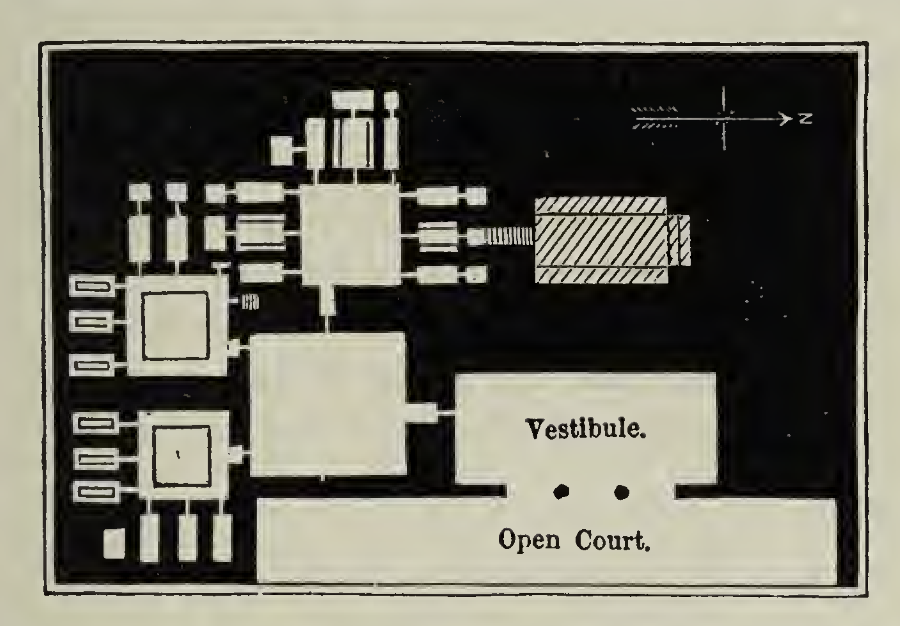
We walked on up the glen, through olive groves which seem denser and more ancient than anywhere else round the city. The rocky banks on both sides, but especially on that next Jerusalem, are filled with tombs; and I felt strongly impressed that some one of these was that "new tomb" which Joseph of Arimathea "had hewn for himself" in his garden, in which Jesus was laid. Continuing our walk, we saw traces of Agrippa's wall on the brow of the glen. Then, after crossing the Anathoth road, and turning westward, we came upon more sepulchres, with richly ornamented doorways. But by far the most magnificent sepulchre in this region, and indeed around Jerusalem, is the so-called

TOMB OF THE KINGS.

This remarkable catacomb is half a mile from the city, not far from the great northern road. On reaching the spot we find a broad trench, hewn in the rock to the depth of eighteen feet. An inclined plane leads down to it. Then we pass, by a very low doorway, through a wall of rock seven feet thick, into a court ninety-two feet long, eighty-seven broad, and about twenty deep, all excavated in the living rock. The sides are hewn quite smooth. On the western side is a vestibule, originally supported by two columns. The front has a deep frieze and cornice, richly ornamented with clusters of grapes, triglyphs, and pateræ, alternating over a continuous garland of fruit and foliage, which was carried down the sides. Unfortunately, this beautiful façade is almost obliterated. When perfect, it must have been magnificent.

The entrance to the tomb is at the southern end of the vestibule. The door, with its approaches and fastenings, is one of the most remarkable and ingenious pieces of mechanism which has come down to us from antiquity. The whole is now in a ruinous state; but enough remains to show what it once was. The door could only be reached

by a subterranean passage, the entrance to which was a small trap-door in the floor of the vestibule; and when reached, it was found to be covered by a circular stone, like a small millstone, which had to be "rolled away" to the side, up an inclined plane. In addition to this there was another large stone, which could be slid in behind the door, at right angles, along a concealed groove, and which held it immovably in its place. And there was, besides, an inner door of stone opening on a pivot, and shutting by its own weight. The interior arrangements of this splendid monument will be best understood by the accompanying plan. In one respect it differs from all the other



sepulchres yet known about Jerusalem—the inner chamber, which is several feet lower than any of the others, formerly contained two sarcophagi of white marble, beautifully ornamented with wreaths of flowers. The most perfect of them was carried away by the well-known French savan, M. de Saulcy, and placed in the museum of the Louvre. The other is in fragments.

Even this tomb contains no record of its history. The memory and the names of those who were laid here in royal state cannot now be ascertained with certainty. There is a high probability that it was the sepulchre of Helena, the widowed queen of Adiabene. It is known that she became

a proselyte to Judaism, resided in the Holy City during the apostolic age, and made for herself a great sepulchre. Able scholars have questioned the identity. Be this as it may, we have here a costly, grand, and strongly guarded sepulchre, now opened, wrecked, and rifled, as if to show that man's home is not, cannot be, on earth.

Other celebrated tombs I visited and explored. *The Tombs of the Judges*, a mile farther north; the *Tomb of El Musahny*, recently discovered, and of the earliest Jewish type; the *Tomb of Helena*, &c. I need not describe them. The general plan of all is the same; and all are equally without story, without name, and without tenant. The hand of the spoiler has not even spared the ashes of fallen, outcast Israel. The time foretold by Jeremiah has come:— "At that time, saith the Lord, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves; and they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all the host of heaven . . . . they shall not be gathered nor be buried; they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth" (viii. 1, 2.)



Olivet and Bethany.

"In the daytime he was teaching in the temple, and at night he went out and abode in the mount that is called the Mount of Olives."—LUKE xxi 37.

THE name Olivet goes direct to the Christian's heart, and awakens the deepest and holiest feelings there. It recalls so many memories of Jesus,—of his wondrous power and still more wondrous love,—of his human sympathies and his divine teachings,—of the greatness of his agony and the glories of his triumph, — that the heart overflows with love and gratitude the moment the name falls upon the ear. With Gethsemane on one side and Bethany on the other; with paths, well marked, connecting them, often trodden by the Son of Man; with gardens of olives and vineyards between, where he was wont to pray for his people and weep for a sinful world; with one spot upon those terraced slopes overlooking the wilderness, where his feet stood on the eve of the Ascension, and where his wondering disciples received from white-robed angels the joyous promise of his second advent.—With these hallowed associations clustering round it, surely it will be admitted that, above and beyond all places in Palestine, Olivet witnessed "GOD MANIFEST IN FLESH."

"Here may we sit and dream
Over the heavenly theme,
Till to our soul the former days return.
* * * *

Or choose thee out a cell
In Kidron's storied dell,

Beside the springs of love that never die;
Among the olives kneel,
The chill night blast to feel,
And watch the moon that saw thy Master's agony."

Yet I was disappointed in Olivet,—not in its associations; no Christian could be disappointed in these,—but in its appearance. One always expects to find something in a holy or historic place worthy of its history. Here there is nothing. When approaching Jerusalem from the west I looked, but I looked in vain, for any "mountain" or even "mount" that the eye could at once rest on and identify as Olivet. Beyond the grey battlements of the city lay a long *ridge*, barely overtopping the Castle of David, and the higher buildings on Zion,—drooping to the right it opens a view of the distant mountains of Moab, and running away far to the north it fills in the whole background. This is Olivet. It has no striking features; it might be said to have no features at all. It is rounded, regular, colourless; and the air is so clear, and the colouring so defective, that it seems to rise immediately out of the city. In the distance the outline is almost horizontal, but as one draws near it becomes wavy, and at length three tops or eminences can be distinguished, the central and highest crowned with the dome and minaret of the "Church of the Ascension," and the other two about equi-distant to the right and left. Photographs show these peculiarities, and consequently look flat and uninteresting; while in every sketch I have seen, the imagination of the artist has greatly increased both the apparent distance and elevation of Olivet, thus sacrificing truth to effect.

When I passed round the city and stood on the brow of the Kidron, at the north-east angle of the wall, the view was much more impressive; in fact, this is one of the most picturesque views about Jerusalem. Olivet *now* assumed the appearance of a "mount." At my feet was the deep glen, shaded with dusky olive groves; and from the bottom

swelled up in grey terraced slopes and grey limestone crags, nearly six hundred feet, the hill-side. Close on my right was the city wall, running south in a straight line near—not *upon*—the rocky edge of the ravine, till it joined the loftier and more massive wall of the Haram. The depth of the Kidron and the comparative elevation and respective positions of Moriah and Olivet are seen from this point to great advantage. The sides of the two hills meet, and here and there overlap in the bottom of the narrow crooked glen; while the summits are barely half a mile apart,—Olivet overtopping its sister three hundred feet. The side of Moriah is steep and bare as if scarped; while the whole of Olivet is cultivated in little terraced fields of wheat and barley, intermixed with a few straggling vines trailing along the ground or hanging over the rude terrace walls. Fig trees are seen at intervals, but olives are still, as they were in our Lord's days, the prevailing trees on the mount. It has as good a title now as it perhaps ever had to the name "*Olivet.*" Olive trees dot it all over,—in some places far apart, in others closer together, though nowhere so close as to form groves. Most of them are old, gnarled, and stunted, a few are propped up and in the last stage of decay, and I saw scarcely any young vigorous trees.

I endeavoured, when residing on the Mount of Olives, to localize every incident of Scripture history of which it was the scene, to bring together the sacred narrative and the sacred place,—so to group, in fact, the various actors on the spots where they acted, that the stories might be made to assume to my mind as far as possible the semblance of reality. I tried to follow every footstep of David, and of David's Greater Son,—to recall every circumstance, and note every local characteristic, and every topographical feature that might illustrate the prophecies and parables, the discourses, miracles, and walks of our Lord. Some of the leading points are fixed, and cannot be mistaken, such as Bethany, and Jerusalem, and the one great road from the

city, deeply cut in zigzag lines down the steep side of Moriah from St. Stephen's gate to the bridge over the Kidron. Then there are the two main roads over Olivet to Bethany, branching at the bridge,—the one crossing the summit almost in a straight line, is steep, rugged, and only fit for pedestrians or active cavaliers; the other, diverging to the right, winds round the southern shoulder of the hill, and is easier, and better adapted for caravans and processions. Many difficulties met me in the arrangement of details. Gradually, however, they cleared away. Daily study of the Record, and daily examination of the mount, removed one after another, until at length the texts and places, the stories and the scenes, so completely harmonized and blended that they formed one series of graphic and vivid life pictures.

I shall now try to show my reader what I saw myself, and make Olivet to him what it must ever henceforth be to me,—one of the most venerated and instructive spots on earth. True, Christianity is not a religion of "holy places;" on the contrary, the whole spirit of the Gospel,—the whole writings and teachings of our Lord and his apostles, tend to withdraw men's minds from an attachment to places, and to lead them to worship a spiritual God "in spirit and in truth." It was not without a wise purpose that the exact scenes of the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, and the Ascension, were left unknown; and that these events themselves were made to stand altogether unconnected with places, giving no sanctity to them, and deriving no superior efficacy from them. God thus took away all ground and excuse for that superstition which will only offer its incense at an earthly shrine. He showed that Christianity was designed to be the religion of the world, and not merely of Palestine,—that the story of Jesus and his salvation was written not for one nation, but to be read and understood equally by all mankind.

This is true: and yet it is no less true that when we stand

upon the spot where the discourses of the Gospel were delivered, or where the incidents of the Gospel occurred,—when we look upon the very objects which called forth the sayings of our Lord, or which gave a turn and a point to his language, or which furnished his illustrations, or which formed the subjects of his prophetic denunciations, a flood of light is thrown upon the record, and the various statements, discourses, and stories assume a freshness, a life-like vividness, which equally delights and astonishes us.

GETHSEMANE.

It would appear that our Lord, during his visits to Jerusalem, never spent a night in the city. Sometimes he walked to Bethany, but usually he made the Mount of Olives his home. Thus we read in John, "Every man went unto his own house, *Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives*" (vii. 53; viii. 1); and Luke narrating the events of another visit, says, "In the daytime he was teaching in the Temple; and at night he went out *and abode in the mount that is called the Mount of Olives*" (xxi. 37). A habit is here spoken of,—the usual practice of our Lord, as is still more plainly intimated in the story of his betrayal,—"He came out, and went, *as he was wont*, to the Mount of Olives" (ver. 39; see also John xviii. 2). It appears, moreover, that there was one particular "place" on the mount to which he was accustomed to go, and in which to stay; for it is added, "And when he was *at the place*, he said," &c. John informs us that this "place" was a garden—an enclosure planted with trees (κῆπος, xviii. 1); and that it was "over the brook Cedron," that is, on the other side from Jerusalem. Matthew and Mark give us the name of the "garden"—"Then cometh Jesus with them unto *a place* called GETHSEMANE," or "oil-press," doubtless because there was an oil-press in the garden, as there usually is connected with every olive-yard (Matt. xxvi. 36; Mark xiv. 32).

Here, then, we have a most interesting trait in the character of Jesus, and we have a spot indicated which is more closely connected than any other with his private life. After wearing and toilsome labours during the day in the crowded streets of the city—after jarring controversies with scribes and Pharisees in the Temple courts, he was accustomed to retire in the evening with his disciples to this garden, and there spend the night in peaceful seclusion. And when fanaticism broke forth into open persecution—when an infatuated populace cried for his blood, and took up stones to stone him, passing through them he found an asylum in the deep shade of Gethsemane (John viii. 59; Luke x. 25–38). Here, too, he had his *Oratory*, where he was wont to pray. On the night of his betrayal, when he had led his disciples to "the garden," he said,—"Sit ye here, while I go and pray *yonder*" (Matt. xxvi. 36), no doubt indicating some well-known spot away in the deeper shade of the olive trees. There is a strong probability too that this was that "*certain place*" mentioned by Luke where Jesus was praying when, at the request of his disciples, he taught them the Lord's Prayer (Luke xi. 1; x. 38–42). It may have been to this very place that Nicodemus came by night, having heard the secret of the Saviour's retreat from some of his followers, or perhaps having been himself the owner of the garden.

That the Son of Man should have his house in a garden—that he should be forced to rest, and sleep, and pray on the hill-side, under the open canopy of heaven—must seem to many passing strange. It looks like a practical commentary on his own touching declaration: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." May we not ask, however, "If there was no house in Jerusalem that would shelter, no friend there that would welcome him, was not Bethany near? Was there not a home for him in the house of Martha? Why did he not go to Bethany?" Those

at all familiar with Eastern life will easily understand the whole matter. Nearly all the inhabitants of Palestine sleep during a great part of the year in the open air, on the housetop, or in garden or field. It is common for families to leave their houses in town or village early in spring, and bivouac under a tree or rude arbour the whole summer. Travellers, when about to spend a few days or weeks at a town or village, generally rent a garden and live there. I have often done so myself, and have slept with the earth for a bed, and the starry sky for a canopy. There is no rain, and no dew; the ground is dry, and the fresh balmy air of the country is far preferable to the close, stifling atmosphere of an eastern city. Another thing must not be overlooked. As society is constituted in the East, one can have no privacy in a strange house, night or day. The *one* apartment in which all the males sit, sleep, and eat, is open to all comers. If we would meditate or pray, we must go, like Peter, to the house-top (Acts x. 9), or, like Isaac, to the field (Gen. xxiv. 63), or, like Jesus, to a mountain (Luke vi. 12). Our Lord desired a place where he could be alone with his disciples, and alone with his Father; and he chose the garden on Olivet. Most probably it belonged to some secret friend who placed it at his disposal. Be this as it may, his followers knew it well, "and Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place, for Jesus oft-times resorted thither with his disciples" (John xviii. 2).

Often and often I have walked from Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives—by day, in the full blaze of sunlight; at even, when the shadows were deep in the Kidron; in the still night, when the moon shed her pale silvery beams on grey crag and dusky tree. Now I wandered round the southern angle of the Haram, past those great old stones, and along the brow of the glen; now I went straight down from the city-gate; now round by the north wall. All the paths to Olivet converge at the ancient road which winds down the steep bank to the bridge. I always felt, as I

passed down that road and crossed the Kidron, that I was treading in the very footsteps of my Lord, and on that very path along which he so often retired, weary and sorrowful, to his retreat in Gethsemane.

After crossing the bridge, the ancient road ascends the lower slope of Olivet for about a hundred yards, and then branches. One branch runs right up to the summit, the other turns to the right. In the angle between them is a little garden, enclosed by a high modern wall. This is the *traditional*, and it may be the *real* GETHSEMANE. At any rate, Gethsemane could not have been far distant. The garden belongs to the Latin convent. Entering we find trim flower-beds, and gravel walks. These have no attractions for us; neither has "the bank on which the apostles slept," nor "the grotto of the Agony," nor any other of the apocryphal "holy places," which ecclesiastical superstition has placed there; but eight venerable olive trees rivet our attention. They are real patriarchs; their huge trunks are rent, hollowed, gnarled, and propped up, and their boughs hoary with age. They seem old enough, and probably *are* old enough, to have formed an arbour for Jesus. How often have I sat on a rocky bank in that garden! How often, beneath the grateful shade of the old olives, have I read and re-read the story of the betrayal! How often have I fondly lingered there far on into the still night, when the city above was hushed in sleep, and no sound was heard save the sighing of the breeze among the olive branches, thinking and thinking on those miracles of love and power that He performed there!

"Who can thy deep wonders see,
Wonderful Gethsemane!
There my God bare all my guilt;
This through grace can be believed;
But the horrors which he felt
Are too vast to be conceived.
None can penetrate through thee,
Doleful, dark Gethsemane!"

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE FORETOLD.

Our Lord had paid his last visit to the temple. When passing out, solemn and sad, the disciples said, "Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!" They had probably heard some word fall from his lips which excited their alarm, and they thus tried to awaken in his mind a deeper interest in their venerated temple. It was in vain. "Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down" (Mark xiii. 1, 2). He went on, crossed the Kidron, and followed the road to Bethany, apparently the lower road, for he came to a commanding point "over against the temple," and there sat down. The temple and its courts were in full view; the eye could see distinctly across the ravine, the gorgeous details of its architecture, and the colossal magnitude of its masonry; and there, with his eye upon them, and his disciples' attention directed to them, he foretold the destruction of both temple and city, summing up with the terrible words, "This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away" (Luke xxi. 33).

I walked up that same path. I sat down on a projecting rock "over against the temple." It may not have been the very spot on which Christ sat, but it could not have been far from it. I looked, and I *saw* that the prophecy was fulfilled to the letter—not a single stone of the temple remains. I read the whole of the prophecies and parables uttered at that place by the Saviour, and I read them with a far deeper interest, and a far more intense feeling of reality than I had ever experienced before (Matt. xxiv., xxvi.)

DAVID'S FLIGHT FROM ABSALOM.

Crossing the Kidron by the bridge—a bridge which, I may state, is only intended to raise the road, as there is neither "brook" nor brook-bed in this part of the Kidron—

leaving the picturesque Church of the Virgin down in its sunken area on the left, and Gethsemane on the right, I climbed the ancient road to the top of Olivet. Here and there the rock has been cut away, and rude steps formed; more frequently deep tracks or channels, worn by the feet of countless wayfarers during long, long centuries, are seen on the rocky ledges. I was now on the footsteps of David, who, when fleeing from Absalom, "went over the brook Kidron toward *the way of the wilderness*. . . and went up by the ascent of Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered; and he went barefoot; and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up weeping as they went" (2 Sam. xv. 23, 30). It was a sad and touching spectacle; and dearly did the king then pay for those sins which had led to the formation of an ill-assorted and badly-trained family.

On reaching the top of the mount, David turned to take a last fond look at his home, now the seat of unnatural rebellion; and there, in sight of the Holy City and Ark, he paused to worship God. In his hour of suffering he carried into practice the noble sentiments of the 42d Psalm, "I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." From the brow of Olivet the eye looks down upon Jerusalem as upon an embossed picture. The ravines that surround it, the walls that encompass it, the streets and lanes that zigzag through it, are all visible. From the same spot another and a widely-different view opens to the eastward. The mount stands on the edge of the wilderness. With the crowded city behind, and the bare parched desert in front, one would almost think Olivet divided the living from the dead. The "wilderness of Judea" begins at our feet; breaking down in a succession of white naked

hills, and jagged limestone cliffs, and naked grey ravines, until at length the hills drop suddenly and precipitously into the deep valley of the Jordan, beyond which rises, as suddenly and precipitously, an unbroken mountain range extending north and south along the horizon, far as the eye can see. That range is the *Peraea*, the "place beyond," of the New Testament, and the Moab and Gilead of the Old. The "way" along which David fled was appropriately named the "way of the wilderness." That "wilderness" was the scene of the Temptation, and the "way" through it was the scene of the "Parable of the Good Samaritan," which was related by our Lord either upon this very summit, or on the path between it and Bethany. How doubly striking must that beautiful illustration of charity have been when Jesus would point to that dreary, dangerous desert road, while repeating the words, "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves!" (Luke x. 25–37.)

THE ASCENSION.

"And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them; and it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven" (Luke xxiv. 50). When on Olivet I was deeply impressed with the belief—I can scarcely tell why, but so it was—that Jesus on this occasion took the upper road, over the top of the mount. It was more private; and the moment the summit was passed, he and his disciples were in absolute solitude. Jerusalem is shut out by the hill; and Bethany is hidden until we reach a rocky spur overhanging the little nook in which it lies embosomed. "He led them out *as far as* to Bethany." This can scarcely mean "*into* Bethany." The Ascension appears to have been witnessed only by the disciples; and it could not, therefore, have taken place *in* the village; but it must have been close to it. I saw one spot, "as far" from Jerusalem

as Bethany, very near the village, and yet concealed from view, and I thought that it, in all probability, was the very place on which the Saviour's feet last rested. As I sat there and read the simple, graphic story of the ascension (Luke xxiv. 50; Acts i. 9–12), I was impressed as I never had been before with the intense, the almost startling vividness of the sacred narrative. The Saviour gradually ascending while the words of blessing still flowed from his lips—the wondering, awe-stricken disciples following him upward and upward with eager gaze — the cloud slowly folding round him, and at length hiding him in its bright bosom—the white-robed angels bursting suddenly from it and standing in the midst of the disciples! What a glorious picture! What joy it brings to the Christian's heart! Our Substitute, our Saviour, our Brother, our Forerunner, thus ascending on the wings of victory to the heaven he had won for us! While I read and meditated, it seemed as if there was wafted to my ear in voice of sweetest melody the cheering words of the angelic promise, "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him to go into heaven" (Acts i. 11). "Even so come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

The top of the Mount of Olives is the traditional scene of the ascension, and a church was built over it in the fourth century by Helena the mother of Constantine. That building has long since disappeared, and the reputed site is now occupied by an humble chapel which stands in the court of a mosque! Crowds of pilgrims visit it, and have done so for many centuries. The guardian shows them the print of one of the Saviour's feet in the rock, and tells them that both footprints were there until the Mohammedans stole one of them. Bishop Ellicott and others think the traditional may be the true site of the ascension; but I cannot see how the words "as far as to Bethany" can be made to signify "to the top of Olivet," which is not half way to that village.

BETHANY.

What particularly struck me in all my visits to Bethany was its solitude. It looks as if it were shut out from the whole world. No town, village, or human habitation is visible from it. The wilderness appears in front through an opening in the rocky glen; and the steep side of Olivet rises close behind. When Jesus retired from Jerusalem to Bethany, no sound of the busy world followed him—no noisy crowd broke in upon his meditation. In the quiet home of Martha, or in some lonely recess of Bethany's secluded dell, he rested, and taught, and prayed. How delighted I was one evening, when seated on a rocky bank beside the village, reading the story of Lazarus, to hear a passing villager say, "There is the tomb of Lazarus, and yonder is the house of Martha!" They may not be, most probably they are not, the real places; but this is Bethany, and the miracle wrought there still dwells in the memory of its inhabitants. And when the unvarying features of nature are there too—the cliffs, the secluded glen, the Mount of Olives — few will think of traditional "holy places." From the place where I sat I saw—as Martha and Mary had seen from their house-top—those blue mountains beyond Jordan, where Jesus was abiding when they sent unto him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick"(John x. 40; xi. 3). I also saw the road "from Jerusalem to Jericho" winding past the village, and away down the rocky declivities into the wilderness. By that road Jesus was expected; and one can fancy with what earnest, longing eyes the sisters looked along it—ever and anon returning and looking, from the first dawn till waning twilight. And when at last he did come, and Martha heard the news, one can picture the touching scene, how she ran along that road, and with streaming eyes and quivering lips uttered the half-reproachful and still half-hopeful cry, "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died."

Bethany is now, and apparently always was, a small, poor, mountain hamlet; with nothing to charm except its seclusion, and nothing to interest save its associations. It is a remarkable fact that Christ's great miracle has been to it as a new baptism, conferring a new name. It is now called *El-Azarîyeh*, which may be interpreted, "The Place of Lazarus." The "palms" are all gone which gave it its old name *Beth-any*, "House of Dates;" but the crags around, and the terraced slopes above it are dotted yet with venerable fig-trees, as if to show that its sister village, *Beth-phage*, "House of Figs," is not forgotten, though its site is lost. The houses of Bethany are of stone, massive and rude in style. Over them, on the top of a scarped rock, rises a fragment of heavy ancient masonry—perhaps a portion of an old watch-tower. The reputed tomb of Lazarus is a deep narrow vault, apparently of no great antiquity.

CHRIST'S TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM.

Our Lord reached Bethany from Jericho on the evening of Friday after sunset, or the morning of Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath (John xii. 1); and on the next day (ver. 12), he made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. It was the Passover week. The holy city was crowded, and the fame of Jesus, and of the miracle he had performed on Lazarus, brought multitudes to Bethany. He knew that the time was now come for the complete fulfilment of prophecy, and that Zion's King should that day in triumph enter Zion's gates (Zech. ix. 9). Knowing what was before him, it was natural he should take the easy caravan road round the southern shoulder of Olivet, and not the steep and difficult one over the summit. When setting forth there was nothing either in dress or mien to distinguish Jesus from others. Prophecy declared that he should be "meek and lowly," and he was "meek and lowly." The little band of humble disciples gathered closely round his person, while the multitude thronged the path, and lined the rocky banks above

it. Soon after leaving Bethany the road meets a ravine which furrows deeply the side of Olivet. From this point the top of Zion is seen; but the rest of the city is hid by an intervening ridge; and just opposite this point, on the other side of the ravine, I saw the site and remains of an ancient village. The road turns sharply to the right, descends obliquely to the bottom of the ravine, and then turning to the left, ascends and reaches the top of the opposite ridge a short distance above the site of the village. Is not this the place where Jesus said to the two disciples, "*Go into the village over against you?*" These active footmen could cross the ravine direct in a minute or two, while the great procession would take some time in slowly winding round the road. The people of the village saw the procession; they knew its cause, for the fame of Jesus' miracles had reached them; they were thus prepared to give the ass to the disciples the moment they heard, "The Lord had need of him." And the disciples taking the ass, led it up to the road, and met Jesus. A temporary saddle was soon made of the loose outer robes of the people, as I have myself seen done a hundred times in Palestine. Some of the people now broke down branches from the palm trees, and waving them in triumph, threw them in the path. Others, still more enthusiastic, spread their garments in the way, as I have seen Mohammedan devotees do before a distinguished saint. Zechariah's prophecy was now fulfilled to the letter: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy king cometh unto thee; He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass" (ix. 9).

The procession advances. The crown of the ridge is gained; and Jerusalem in its full extent and beauty bursts upon the view. Moriah, crowned by the temple, rises proudly from the deep, dark Kidron; Zion rises higher yet away beyond it, showing to advantage the palace of Herod, and the lofty battlements of Hippicus and its sister

towers; then the great city, and its gardens stretching far beyond. One look on their beloved and beauteous city, and one on their wonder-working King (Luke xix. 37), the multitudes raised their voices in a long shout of triumph, "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; hosanna in the highest" (Matt. xxi. 9).

But how was Jesus affected by these joyous acclamations, and by that noble view? His omniscient eye looked beneath the exuberance of enthusiasm—in upon the evil heart of unbelief. It looked, too, from the gorgeous buildings of the city, away down the dark vista of time, and saw looming in the future, ruin, desolation, and woe. Therefore when he came near—when he came down, probably, to that point where the temple was directly facing him, and all the richness of its architecture could be seen,—"He wept over it:"—

"Why doth my Saviour weep
  At sight of Sion's bowers?
Shows it not fair from yonder steep,
  Her gorgeous crown of towers?
Mark well his holy pains,
  'Tis not in pride or scorn,
That Israel's King with sorrow stain
  His own triumphal morn.

'If thou hadst known, e'en thou,
  At least in this thy day,
The message of thy peace! but now
  'Tis passed for aye away:
Now foes shall trench thee round,
  And lay thee even with earth,
And dash thy children to the ground,
  Thy glory and thy mirth.'

And doth the Saviour weep
  Over his people's sin?
Because we will not let him keep
  The souls he died to win?
Ye hearts that love the Lord,
  If at this sight ye burn,
See that in thought, in deed, in word,
  Ye hate what made him mourn."

The scene here closes, so far as Olivet is concerned. The mount is studded all over with traditional "holy places," but the only ones which tend to illustrate the sacred narrative, or throw light on the journeys, parables, prophecies, or miracles of our Lord, are those to which I have conducted my reader.



IV.

The Battle-fields of Gibeon, Ai, and Michmash.

"I wandered on to many a shrine,
By faith or history made divine;
And then I visited each place
Where valor's deeds had left a trace."

THE stars were still trembling in the sky when, from the top of our little tower, we heard the impatient horses champing their bits beneath. We were soon in the saddle, and dashing down the rocky side of Olivet. It was a dewy morn in the end of September, and the air was fresh and balmy. Gethsemane and the Kidron were in deep gloom; but the first fleecy clouds of autumn, high overhead, had already caught the ruddy rays of the coming sun. A death-like silence reigned in the Holy City as we rode past. Our path led through the olive-groves, and then across the great northern road, near those mounds of ashes which have of late created so much controversy. At a smart pace we traversed the rugged table-land at the head of the Kidron, noticing the tombs in the rocks on each side. The plain but chaste façade of the Sepulchre of the Judges drew our attention. Within its dark vaults are some seventy or eighty recesses for bodies; and here, it is said, the members of the Jewish Sanhedrim were laid in glory, "every one in his own house."

We had now reached the western brow of the table-land; and the deep glen of Wady Beit Hanîna was at our feet, its banks formed into natural terraces by the horizontal

strata. The whole scene was painfully desolate. Verdure there was none; — but grey crowns and grey cliffs protruding everywhere from the grey soil. In places the declivities seemed as if covered with white flags. The few old olives scattered singly or in groups along the glen can scarcely be said to relieve the uniform bareness; for they too, look dusty and sapless; and the stunted trees and shrubs, clinging to the mountain-sides above, only make the features of nature more forbidding. There was a total want of colour and variety of outline in the landscape. The dull uniform grey, and the long bare declivities and rounded summits had nothing attractive in them. Most of the higher peaks are singularly formed. They rise in concentric rings of terraces, like steps of stairs, from bottom to top.

MIZPEH.

Away beyond the Wady towered Neby Samwîl, the highest and most conspicuous peak in southern Palestine. Its conical top, crowned with village, mosque, and minaret, forms the only striking feature in the northern view from Jerusalem. To it we were now bound as the first point of interest in our tour. Diving down into the glen; and then clambering up through terraced vineyards, over rude fences, along rocky brakes,—startling flocks of partridges at almost every step—we gained the summit, and committed our panting steed to the care of a group of wild-looking boys who had been watching our approach from the walls of a ruined tower. The village sheikh was there to welcome us, conspicuous in his scarlet robe, which to this day is the badge of royalty or power among the inhabitants of Palestine (Lam. iv. 5; Dan. v. 7; Matt. xxvii. 28). Several of his elders stood round him, whose outer garments in the brilliancy and variety of hue of their embroidery reminded me of Joseph's coat of many colours.

Taking the worthy chief into our service we requested

him to lead the way to the top of the minaret. What a noble view was there! I had seen none to be compared with it among the mountains of Palestine. It is far more extensive than that from Olivet, or Gerizim, or any of the peaks around Hebron. Away on the western horizon slept the "Great Sea;" and from this and other commanding heights in Palestine I saw how natural it was for the ancient Israelite to make the word "sea" (*yâm*), a synonym for "west" (Gen. xxviii. 14; Ps. cvii. 3). Along its glittering shore lay the plains of Sharon and Philistia, extending to the horizon on the north and south—the orange groves of Joppa looking like a shadow, and the towns of Ramleh, Lydda, and Ekron like points of brilliant light on the smooth grey surface. Nearer were the declivities of Judah's mountains, furrowed deep with many a ravine, and bristling with many a castle-like village and ruin. The broad summit of the ridge was a forest of hill-tops,—separated, here by a little upland plain, there by a deep, dark, winding glen. On the east the Jordan and its valley were hid behind the hills of Benjamin, but the chain of Moab and Gilead rose over them,—a vast wall of azure, built up against a golden sky, and streaked from base to summit with rich purple shadows. The mountain strongholds of Judah and Benjamin, renowned of yore in sacred story, or celebrated in sacred song, were grouped around me;—Gibeon on its "hill;" Beth-horon guarding the western pass (2 Chron. viii. 4); Beeroth and Bethel, and away beyond them the "rock Rimmon," where the six hundred men, the shattered remnant of a guilty tribe, found an asylum (Judges xx. 45–48); Ramah of Benjamin crowning its "height" (1 Kings xv. 17); Gibeah of Saul, now a bare desolate "mount" (1 Sam. x. 26); Kirjath-jearim, perched on the side of "the hill," where the ark of the Lord remained so long in the house of Abinadab (1 Sam. vii. 1, 2); Bethlehem, overlooking the wilderness, where its shepherd warriors were trained to battle; and in the centre of the

group, begirt with mountains (Ps. cxxv. 2), Jerusalem herself sat in queenly state. That was a panorama which, once seen, could never be forgotten. Time cannot deface the picture;—the mind must treasure up the stirring, hallowed memories with which every feature is associated. Probably this peak, from which the western pilgrim gets his earliest glimpse of the Holy City, was in Tasso's mind, when he thus described the effect of "that first far view" upon the Crusaders,—

> "Lo, towered Jerusalem salutes the eyes!
> A thousand pointing fingers tell the tale;
> 'Jerusalem!' a thousand voices cry,
> 'All hail, Jerusalem!' hill, down, and dale
> Catch the glad sounds, and shout, 'Jerusalem, all hail!'"

The mountain gets its modern name from an early tradition, which makes this village the site of Ramathaim-zophim,—the house and burial-place of the "prophet Samuel." Topography is against the tradition, but it seems to identify this spot as the *Mizpeh*,—"watch-tower" of Benjamin (Josh xviii. 26); the gathering-place of Israel, where the tribes assembled and bound themselves by an oath never to return to their homes till they had avenged on the inhabitants of Gibeah the rights of hospitality outraged by an abominable crime (Judges xx.); where Saul was chosen monarch, and where, for the first time, the hills of Palestine echoed back the loyal cry, "God save the king" (1 Sam. x. 17). It appears too that this is that very "high place of Gibeon" where Solomon offered a thousand burnt-offerings, and where the Lord, in answer to his prayer, gave him the wisdom which made him a world's proverb (1 Kings iii. 4–12). Something of sanctity has ever since clung to the spot. The Crusaders built a church on it; and now, within its shattered walls, the Mohammedans have a prayer-niche, and perform their devotions beside the traditional tomb of the great Jewish prophet.

GIBEON AND ITS BATTLE-FIELDS.

At the northern base of Neby-Samwîl, in a little upland plain, stands a low circular hill with steep sides and flat top. The sides are covered with terraced vineyards, and on the top is the village of El-Jîb, the representative of the ancient capital of the wily "Gibeonites." The name describes the site,—*Gibeon* signifies "belonging to a hill." We were soon in the midst of the village examining the ruins of its old castle, and the massive fragments of ancient masonry which still form the substructions of its houses. But the fountain—there is only one—was the main point of attraction. It bursts from a rent cliff at the eastern base, and empties its tiny stream into a large reservoir a few yards off in the plain. This is that "Pool of Gibeon" where Abner and Joab, the rival warriors of Israel met, and where David's general gained a crowning victory (2 Sam. ii. 12–32).

But a still more famous battle was fought beneath the walls of Gibeon. Its old inhabitants, by a clever trick, had beguiled the Israelites into a league (Josh. ix. 3–15). The Canaanites combined against them, and five Amorite kings marched their forces to punish the traitor Gibeonites (x. 1–6). Messengers were sent to Joshua, then encamped at Jericho, praying for help. It was readily granted. In the evening Joshua set out; all night his active troops climbed the rugged defiles; with the first dawn they crossed the rising ground which shuts in the little plain on the east, and ere a note of warning could be sounded, they charged the besiegers. The attack was sudden and the victory decisive. The banded forces broke and fled (x. 7–10).

Mounting our horses, we turned westward to trace the line of flight. The Israelites "chased them along *the way that goeth up* to Beth-horon" (verse 10). A quarter of a mile west of Gibeon is a *sharp ascent* to a low ridge. Up this the Amorites fled, hard pressed by their pursuers.

From the top of the ridge a long and rugged *descent leads to Beth-horon*, which now appears in front crowning a projecting shoulder of the mountain. The nature of the ground favoured the fugitives, but "as they fled from before Israel, and were in the *going down to Beth-horon*, the Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon them" (ver 11). Joshua led the van of his troops. He saw that the victory was complete, but yet that night must eventually save the Amorite army from total destruction, and enable a large body of them to escape to their cities through the valley of Ajalon, at the foot of the pass down which they were rushing. Then, standing on some commanding rock in the sight of the whole people (ver. 12), in the fulness of faith and in the ardour of enthusiasm, Joshua gave utterance to that wondrous prayer-prophecy — glancing back towards Gibeon and forward upon Ajalon—"*Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon.* And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies" (ver. 12–13).

Beth-horon itself,—"Beth-horon the upper," now called *Beit Ur el-Foka*, an Arabic translation of the Hebrew name,—has little to interest us besides its military associations as a strong outpost of Judea, guarding the principal pass from the western plain to Jerusalem (1 Mac. iii. 13–24). As I sat on the top of its conical hill, beside its shattered walls, I saw the "nether Beth-horon" (Josh. xvi. 3) away below at the bottom of the pass; and further south, on the side of its valley, the little village of Ajalon. The view over the broad expanse of Sharon and Philistia to the sea was glorious.

BEEROTH AND BETHEL.

We now turned our faces eastward again, and rode across wild and bleak hills, dotted here and there with a vineyard or an olive-grove, and in two hours reached Bîreh,

the ancient Beeroth, one of the four cities of the Gibeonites (Josh. ix. 17). The only object of interest there is an old Gothic church, built by the Knights Templars, who held Beeroth during the reign of the Latin kings. I did not linger, but galloped to BETHEL, two miles distant, where I found my tent pitched beside the little fountain.

During the still evening, when the shadows were deepening in the glens, and the last rays of the declining sun gilding the top of rock and cliff, I explored the site of this the most ancient of Israel's holy places. I looked all round in the hope of identifying the spot where Jacob slept, and which he consecrated and called the "House of God." I explored the rock sepulchres, too, which dot the sides of "the mount" (2 Kings xxiii. 16), thinking that one or other of them might be that of "the man of God from Judah," whose bones Josiah respected (ver. 17, 18). Clambering to the top of a shattered tower which crowns the hill of Bethel, I looked long, and in sadness, over that dreary field of ruin, only inhabited by a few shepherds; and I saw how terribly time had fulfilled the city's prophetic doom: "*Bethel shall come to nought*" (Amos v. 5).

AI.

In the early morning, crossing a rocky glen, I ascended the mountain to the spot where Abraham pitched his tent and built his altar, "having Bethel on the west, and Hai (Ai) on the east" (Gen. xii. 8). Here I found a little plateau, stony but fertile, on the very crest of the hill; and on reaching it the valley of the Jordan, and the glittering waters of the Dead Sea suddenly burst upon my view, lying deep, deep down at the foot of a dreary wilderness. On this spot Abraham and Lot had that memorable interview after their herdsmen had disputed, and "they found that the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together, for their substance was great" (Gen. xiii. 3–7). There and then they resolved to separate; and "Lot lifted

up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan that it was well watered" (ver. 10), and he chose that rich region as his abode. How wonderfully graphic did the whole narrative appear to me as I read it on that mountain-top.

Bethel was behind me on the west; but where was Ai—long lost Ai? On this and on two other occasions I visited the district to search for and verify its site. I believe I was successful. Jutting out eastward from the plateau on which I stood is a lower ridge, having deep glens on all sides, except where it joins the mountain. Over its whole summit I found traces of very ancient ruins, with cisterns and caves such as exist on the sites of all mountain cities in Palestine. At the eastern base are large quarries, and many rock-hewn tombs. I had no doubt then, and I have none now, that here stood Ai, "on the east" of Abraham's camping ground and altar.

The capture of Ai forms one of the romantic episodes in Jewish history. The first assault was unsuccessful, and the little army was driven back in confusion (Josh. vii. 4, 5). The second was more skilfully planned, and had the sanction of the God of battles. North-west of Ai, between it and Bethel, is a little rocky glen; and in this, during the night, five thousand chosen Israelites were placed in ambush (Josh. viii. 9, 12). Joshua and the main body took up a position on the commanding ridge north of the city, separated from it by a deep valley (ver. 11). In the morning, before it was yet light, he advanced into the valley, as if to attack the fortifications in front (ver. 13). The first dawn revealed him to the watchful foe, who immediately, leaving Ai in force, charged impetuously down the hill (ver. 14). The Israelites gave way "as if they were beaten, and fled by the way of the wilderness,"—down the wild mountain defiles towards Jericho (ver. 15). It was a feint, and it succeeded. The whole population of the city rushed out in pursuit (ver. 16). Just then, in obedience to the command of God, and, doubtless, in accordance with a

preconcerted signal, Joshua standing on some prominent rock or cliff, "stretched out the spear that he had in his hand toward the city. And the ambush arose quickly out of their place, and they ran, and they entered the city, and hasted, and set the city on fire. And when the men of Ai looked behind them, they saw, and, behold, the smoke of the city ascended up to heaven, and they had no power to flee this way or that way" (ver. 19, 20). They were completely paralyzed. All were put to the sword, and Ai was razed to the ground.

Some centuries later Ai appears to have been rebuilt; but it is now, and has been for a thousand years, a desolate ruin.

MICHMASH.

Much pleased with the result of my visit to the site of Ai, I rode down the rocky glen through which the Israelites fled, and then over bare undulating table-land to Michmash, one of the ancient strongholds of Benjamin. My chief object now was to inspect the scene of Jonathan's singular and successful adventure. The village stands near the summit of a ridge which descends in rugged banks and broken cliffs to a deep valley. On the south side of the valley is a corresponding ridge, crowned by the buildings and ruins of the ancient GEBA—about a mile distant, and in full view from Michmash. Half a mile further down eastward the valley contracts into a ravine, with high naked cliffs on each side; and above the cliff toward Michmash are a few acres of table-land. Riding down to this spot, and examining the features of the glen, the cliffs, and the opposite ridges, I felt convinced that here was the scene of Jonathan's exploit.

The Israelites under Saul were in Geba, and the Philistine army held Michmash (1 Sam. xiii. 14). The Philistines, resolving to force the pass, left the town and advanced to the edge of the ravine (ver. 23). The Israelites, few in

number and dispirited by long oppression (ver. 19–22) retreated to Migron, near Gibeah of Saul (xiv. 2). Jonathan, seeing the harassed state of his country, and the despair of his father's troops, resolved to make a bold attempt to surprise the enemy's camp. The cause of his sudden resolve and his hope of success he explained to his armour-bearer:—"It may be that the Lord will work for us, for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few" (ver. 6). "Do all that is in thine heart," was the reply of his devoted follower; "I am with thee according to thy heart" (ver. 7). The nature of the ground favoured the enterprise. At the point where they had to cross the ravine, "there was a sharp cliff on the one side, and a sharp cliff on the other" (ver. 4). Stealthily and cautiously they descended the southern cliff, screened from view by projecting rocks. They then climbed the north bank to a place where, by stepping out on some projecting ledge, they would be in view of the Philistines, and yet sufficiently distant to escape if requisite. Advancing from behind a crag they showed themselves to the enemy, who naturally said to each other, on seeing them so close to the camp, "Behold the Hebrews come forth out of the holes where they had hid themselves." "Come up to us," cried the Philistines. The desired omen was thus given (compare verses 10, 12). "Upon their hands and upon their feet" these brave men scaled the rocks, and rushed upon the foe. A sudden panic seized the whole host. The Lord fought for Israel. The strange and unexpected attack, and the simultaneous shock of an earthquake, created such terror and confusion, that the Philistines madly fought with each other (ver. 15). From the heights of Geba Saul's watchmen saw the Philistine army melting away; and Saul's own ear caught the din of battle (ver. 16, 19). Collecting his men he crossed the pass and joined in the slaughter. Swiftly the tidings sped over hill and dale—through city and village—"The Philistines flee;" and swiftly the men of Israel rush from cave, and rock, and stronghold, and join in

pursuit (ver. 21, 22). The battle of Michmash was the first of those fierce conflicts carried on at intervals through the long reigns of Saul and David, and which eventually resulted in the final expulsion of the Philistines from the mountains of Israel.

The modern inhabitants of Michmash seem to inherit something of the fierce and predatory spirit of the Philistines. They dogged me wherever I went, muttering threats and curses, at first asking, but in the end demanding *bakhshîsh.* I took no notice of them further than was absolutely necessary. When at length, having finished my survey of the battle-field, and a sketch of the "pass," I mounted my horse to go to Geba, they drew up before me in formidable array, and swore by "the life of the prophet" I should not move. I insisted, however, in breaking through their ranks; and fortunately for me their valour did not go beyond presenting a few old muskets at my head, and a noisy brandishing of swords and daggers. The goat track by which I had to descend the glen bank was, perhaps, quite as dangerous to life and limb as the lawless vagabonds of Michmash. I have traversed many bad roads in my Syrian wanderings; I have ridden my Arab horse to the very highest peaks of Hermon and Lebanon; but the pass of Michmash was the worst I had ever encountered.

Geba, the ancient city of Canaan, the stronghold of Benjamin, is now represented by a few ruinous huts, in which some half-dozen families of shepherds find a home. A shattered tower, and the foundations of an old church, with heaps of hewn stones and rubbish, are the only vestiges of former greatness. Standing there all solitary on its bare rocky ridge, looking down over barren hills and naked ravines, upon the scathed valley of the Jordan, it is the very type of desolation. The curse has fallen heavily upon "Geba of Benjamin." When Elisha came up the defile from Jericho to Bethel, forests clothed the surrounding heights; now there is not a tree (2 Kings ii. 24). Vine-

yards then covered the terraced sides of glen and hill, from base to summit. They have all disappeared. Cities and fortresses, in the days of Israel's power, crowned every peak and studded every ridge; shapeless mounds now mark their deserted sites. From the side of Geba no less than nine ruined towns and villages were pointed out to me. How wonderfully have the predictions of Moses been fulfilled! "I will destroy your high places .... I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries into desolation .... And I will bring the land into desolation; and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it" (Lev. xxvi. 30–32).

ANATHOTH.

Anathoth is barely three miles south of Geba, and yet the road is so bad, and the intervening glens so deep and rugged, that I was a full hour in reaching it. Were it not for its sacred associations, no man would ever dream of visiting Anathoth—a poor village of some twenty houses, built among white rocks and white ruins, on a bare, grey mountain side. No trees, no verdure, no richness, or grandeur, or beauty; and yet here, in this ancient city of priests (Josh xxi. 18), the prophet *Jeremiah* was born (i. 1). Here he received his first commission to warn and threaten a rebellious nation (i. 5–19); and here, amid mountain solitudes and rocky dells, he mourned and wept over the foreseen calamities of his beloved country. When I looked out over that

"Barren desert, fountainless and dry,"

of which Anathoth commands a prospect wide and wild, his words seemed filled with a double power and pathos: "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! *Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men, that I might leave my people, and go from them!*" (Jer. ix. 1, 2.) One can

trace, in nearly all the images and illustrations with which his writings abound, the influence of those wild scenes amid which he passed his boyhood. Mountains, rocks, wild beasts, shepherds, are again and again introduced; and when predicting the utter ruin of Israel, he says, with characteristic allusion to his home,—"The spoilers are come upon all high places *through the wilderness*" (Jer. xii. 12). The view from Anathoth is dreary and desolate, but it is singularly instructive to the thoughtful student of Jeremiah's prophecies.

GIBEAH OF SAUL.

Looking westward from the village, my eye caught the white top of a conical hill, rising over an intervening ridge. "What is the name of that hill?" I said to an old man at my side. "Tuleil el-Fûl," he replied. Seven long hours I had already been in the saddle, under a cloudless sun, and I had not enjoyed even for a moment "the shadow of a great rock" in that "weary land;" yet the surpassing, all-absorbing interest of holy sites and holy associations made me insensible to fatigue. Tuleil el-Fûl, I knew, was covered of yore with the buildings of *Gibeah*, the city which, by its crimes, brought such calamities on the tribe of Benjamin (Judg. xix.); which gave Israel its first king (1 Sam. xi. 4); and which witnessed the unparalleled maternal tenderness and devotion of poor bereaved Rizpah (2 Sam. xxi. 8–11).

Half an hour's hard ride brought me to its base, and in a few minutes more I was on its summit. A rude cairn on the hill-top—a few massive foundations now supporting little terraces along the sides—some scattered ruins at the western base—these alone mark the site of the royal city of Benjamin. Its very name has long since gone, unless indeed the Arabic *Tuleil* ("little hill") be a translation of the Hebrew *Gibeah*.

NOB IDENTIFIED.

Riding towards Jerusalem, another conical tell attracted

my attention. It is about half a mile from Gibeah. I found on its sides and summit traces of a small but very ancient town; cisterns hewn in the rock, large building stones, portions of the hill levelled and cut away, and the ruins of a small tower. It commands a distinct, though distant view of Mount Zion; Moriah and Olivet being hid by an intervening ridge. I felt convinced that this is the site of the long lost Nob; and I here saw how graphic was the whole description of the march of the Assyrian host upon Jerusalem, as given by Isaiah. I had followed the line from Ai; and on the top of this tell I understood the full meaning of the last sentence, "He shall remain at Nob that night, *he shall shake his hand against the mount of the daughter of Zion*, the hill of Jerusalem" (Isa. x. 28–32).

Between Nob and Gibeah is a deep retired vale, which must have been the scene of the affecting interview between David and Jonathan, recorded in 1 Samuel xx. David seeing that his life was threatened at the court of Saul, went to Nob, got Goliath's sword from Ahimelech the high priest, and fled to Gath. David's visit sealed the fate of Nob. A base Edomite betrayed the innocent priest; and when no Israelite dared to carry out the savage commands of a tyrant king, Doeg proved a willing executioner.

Ahimelech and his whole family were murdered, and "he smote Nob with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children, and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep" (1 Sam. xxii). Sitting on the desolate site I read the story of that terrible massacre; and I shuddered as I looked around and saw the rocks once stained with the blood of the helpless victims. Can we wonder that Ezekiel was commissioned to pronounce a curse upon Palestine, when he could with such truth assign as its cause, "*for the land is full of bloody crimes*" (vii. 23).

Another hour brought me to my home on Olivet, and to the end of one of the most interesting and profitable excursions I ever made in Palestine.





THE LAND OF THE PHILISTINES.



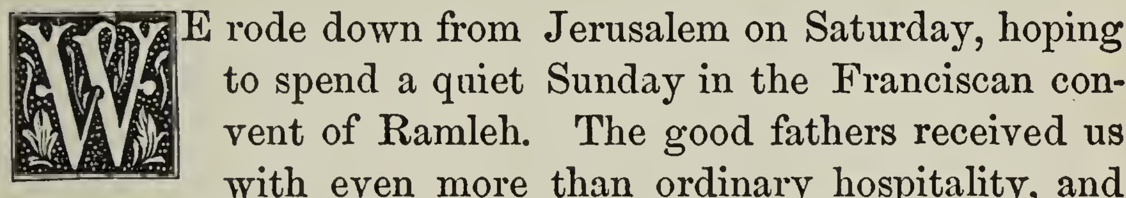




The Land of the Philistines.

I.

"Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will stretch out mine hand upon the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethims, and destroy the remnant of the sea coast."—Ezek. xxv. 16.



WE rode down from Jerusalem on Saturday, hoping to spend a quiet Sunday in the Franciscan convent of Ramleh. The good fathers received us with even more than ordinary hospitality, and quartered us in their choicest cells. They supplied our table, too, with the best their larder afforded; and as we were all well inured to Eastern life, we were able to enjoy the fare. In the early part of Sunday we were left alone, and the deep silence of the convent was most impressive. At intervals the solemn chant of the Latin service in the chapel swept through the cloistered courts and along the corridors, now swelling forth in full harmony, now dying away in a plaintive wail, and again awaking like an echo. In the afternoon an Italian monk, who had been previously acquainted with one of my companions, joined our party. He had seen much of the world, and was a man of polished manners and extensive information. He seemed anxious to promote the cause of education in Syria, but spoke despondingly of this work, to which, he told us, he had devoted his life. His doubts and fears arose mainly from the dif-

ficulties thrown in his way by his superiors, and from the limited means at his command. After some general conversation, we all sat down to read together the various passages of Scripture referring to Philistia and its old warlike inhabitants.

The Philistines, we are told, were an Egyptian tribe, descendants of Ham, who, at some unknown period before the time of Abraham, left their native country and settled on the southern coast of Canaan. Singularly enough, though always called, even by the Israelites, "strangers," (for such is the meaning of *Philistines*,) they gave to the whole land the name it bears to this day—PALESTINE. Abraham and Isaac lived in peace with the Philistine chiefs; and though their dependants had occasional quarrels, yet they fed their flocks on the same pastures and watered them at the same wells. But in after ages the Philistines became the most determined foes of the Israelites.

Philistia is the garden of Palestine. It is about forty miles long from Joppa to Gaza, and about fifteen wide from the Mediterranean to the mountains of Judah. Along the whole sea-board are white sandy downs. Within these is the broad undulating plain, with its deep rich soil, and low mounds at intervals, over whose summits the grey ruins of great cities are now strewn in the dust. On the east the mountains send out their roots far into the plain, carrying with them their rocks, and *braes*, and jungles of dwarf trees and shrubs; and leaving between them picturesque winding vales. Such is Philistia, the *Shephelah* ("low country" or "valley") of the Bible (2 Chron. xxvi. 10; Deut. i. 7). It is a noble region, and it was defended by its old inhabitants with a heroism and devotion which have been rarely equalled. The Philistine warriors could dash across the unbroken plains in their chariots of iron, and drive all their foes before them; but the moment they attempted to penetrate the mountain defiles they were overmatched by the

active Jewish infantry. The physical character of these neighbouring countries solves the mystery of the long, fierce, and undecided struggles of the two nations.

We were deep in our studies, and were becoming rapidly more and more interested in the stories of Samson, the capture of the ark, and David and Goliath, when suddenly the silence that reigned around us was broken by a straggling fire of musketry in the distance. It came nearer. The roll of kettle-drums was next heard, at first faintly, but growing each moment louder and clearer, till at length the ringing shots and warlike music seemed beneath the convent walls. Then there was a hurrying to and fro, and banging of doors, followed by polyglot shoutings. The monk started up in manifest alarm, and rushed out. We all followed, supposing the Bedawîn were making a sudden raid. On gaining the terraced roof, which commanded a view of the great gate, we discovered the cause of all the din and bustle: a Roman Archbishop was on his way to the Holy City, escorted by a troop of irregular cavalry, who showed alike the importance of their trust and their reverence for the Sabbath by making as much noise as their guns and drums were capable of. Unfortunately for our peace, his Eminence resolved to pass the night at Ramleh. To escape for a time from the tumult, I proposed a walk over to Lydda, and my companions gladly acquiesced.

LYDDA.

The sun was already low in the west when we entered the broad avenue-like road that leads to Lydda. It was a beautiful evening—the sky cloudless, the atmosphere transparent as crystal. The sunbeams fell slanting on the dense foliage of the orange and apricot trees, here gilding the topmost leaves, and yonder shooting in lines of gold through the openings. The sea breeze was just setting in. Now it played among the rustling branches of the tall palms, and now it seemed to come down for a moment and breathe its

balmy breath in our faces. The road, covered deeply with red sand, is lined with orchards, in which we saw orange, lemon, peach, pomegranate, and carub trees, intermixed with the palm, walnut, and sycamore; and the whole enclosed by huge hedges of cactus, whose luscious fruit, clinging quaintly to the sides of the great thick leaves, was now almost ripe. An easy walk of three-quarters of an hour brought us to *Ludd*, the modern as well as the more ancient name of the apostolic Lydda (1 Chron. viii. 12). I have often been sadly disappointed on approaching an old Bible city, which fancy had somehow decked in the choicest beauties of nature and art, but which reality transformed into mud hovels on a rocky hill-side. It was not so with Lydda. Even now, though its glory is gone, Lydda has an imposing look. It is embowered in verdure. Olive groves encircle it, and stretch far out over the surrounding plain, and their dusky hue is relieved here and there by the brighter foliage of the apricot and mulberry; while, near the houses, vines are seen creeping over garden walls and clambering up the great gnarled trunks and branches of the walnut trees.

The village stands on a gentle eminence, and high above its terraced roofs rise the splendid ruins of England's patron saint. Lydda, tradition says, was the native place of St. George; and England's chivalrous king, the lion-hearted Richard, built in his honour this noble church, the ruins of which now form the chief attraction of Ludd. The walls and part of the groined roof of the chancel still remain, and also one lofty pointed arch, with its massive clustered columns and white marble capitals, rich in carving and fretwork.

We climbed to the top of the crumbling wall, and there sat down to read the story of Peter's visit to this place (Acts ix. 32–39). The whole village was in full view, and the great plain around it. Peter was away on one of his missionary tours in the hill country of Samaria, "and he

came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda." He *came down* through the defiles of those mountains, and across that broad rich plain of Sharon, or "Saron," and up the gentle ascent to this old town. The saints met him as he entered, and told him of the sufferings of poor paralytic Eneas; and the scene then enacted at his bed-side was such as the people had never before witnessed. "Peter said unto him, Eneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole; arise and make thy bed. And he arose immediately." As the words reached his ears, divine power operated on his body. The wondrous tidings sped from mouth to mouth, from group to group, from town to country. All eagerly inquired; some probably at first doubted, but when they saw the healed paralytic, faith triumphed, and "all that dwelt in Lydda and Saron turned to the Lord." The joyful news soon found its way to Joppa, ten miles distant; and then the mourning friends of the charitable Tabitha despatched quick messengers to tell Peter of her death, half hoping that even she might not be beyond the reach of his power. Peter delayed not, but set out across that western plain on another journey of mercy.

As we looked from our commanding position over that wide landscape, we could not but admit that there was a charm in it independent of all its hallowed associations. It was one of those views which, like a picture by Claude, never pass from the memory. On the north lay the vast plain of Sharon, variegated with green meadows and yellow corn-fields; for, though only the end of April, the fields were "already white to the harvest." In the far distance we could just distinguish the pale blue summits of Carmel. On the east, the view was bounded by the long range of the mountains of Israel, their rounded tops now tinged with the ruddy evening light; and the deep purple shadows of their ravines throwing out in bold relief the old ruined cities and modern villages that crown nearly all the projecting cliffs. On the south, a swell in the plain concealed

Philistia; but that swell was clothed with the orchards of Ramleh, whose tapering minarets and tall white tower shoot up from the midst of the dense foliage. On the west, beyond the gardens, there was first a stretch of brown sandy plain; then a narrow dark belt, traced by the orange groves of Joppa; and then the Mediterranean, gleaming like a mirror of burnished gold beneath the setting sun.

On Monday morning, before the sun had yet risen over Judah's hills, we were all in the saddle, following a gay trooper, bristling with arms, along the broad sandy road to Philistia. Selîm, our new companion, was to fill the double post of guide and guard: and he was admirably qualified for office; for he knew the name of every village, fountain, and wady between Ramleh and Gaza; and he was on terms of close friendship with all the bandits in the province. Our route was at first dreary enough, traversing bleak downs of brown sand, over which a few flocks of sheep and goats followed their shepherds, apparently bound for better pastures. But the morning, as usual, was bright and beautiful, the air fresh and exhilarating, and Selîm full of tales of border raids, and old traditions about Samson and Jalûd (Goliath); so we got on cheerily. An hour's ride brought us to the top of the swell which separates Sharon from Philistia. The latter plain now opened up before us, rolling away to the southern horizon in graceful undulations, clothed with a rich mantle of green and gold—harvest-field, and pasture-land. Ruins were visible everywhere; but the villages were few, small, and far between. The distant hill-sides were more thickly studded with them; and Selîm told us that though, like the old Danites, the people lived there for security, their possessions and crops were chiefly in the plain.

EKRON.

Akîr soon came in sight; and a quarter of an hour's gallop along a beaten path, through fields of corn, brought us to the village. We dismounted, and sat down beside the

only antiquity of the place, a large deep well; such a well, probably, as the servants of Abraham dug at Gerar and Beersheba in olden times. A crowd of villagers collected to gaze at the strangers. The men were chiefly conspicuous for the huge daggers in their girdles, and their enormous turbans, which seemed out of all proportion with the rest of their scanty wardrobe. The women were in rags, and most of the children stark naked. Akîr is a wretched village, containing some forty or fifty mud hovels; its narrow lanes encumbered with heaps of rubbish and filth. It stands on a bare slope, and the ground immediately around it has a dreary and desolate look, heightened by a few stunted trees scattered here and there round the houses. Yet this is all that marks the site and bears the name of the royal city of Ekron. There is not a solitary vestige of royalty there now. With feelings which it would be difficult to describe, we took out our Bibles, and read the doom pronounced upon it by the Hebrew prophet while it yet stood in all the pride of its strength and beauty: "*Ekron shall be rooted up*" (Zeph. ii. 4).

We read also the interesting narrative of the restoration of the ark to the Israelites, when it was conveyed on the new cart from Ekron to Beth-shemesh, (1. Sam. vi.) The position of the latter city was pointed out to us by Selîm. It is beautifully situated in the side of the deep valley of Surâr, the ancient Sorek, a short distance above the place where it opens from the mountains of Judah into the plain. It is about ten miles from Ekron, and a broad vale, or rather depression, winds down from it to the Mediterranean. On the northern slope of this vale Ekron stands. Up that vale ran the ancient highway, "straight to Beth-shemesh," along which went the "lowing kine," bearing the ark, and "turned not aside to the right hand nor to the left." It was just about this season of the year too; for the "men of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat-harvest in the valley"—that very valley of Surâr which now waved with

ripening grain. The chiefs of the Philistines followed the ark to the border of Beth-shemesh—that is, to the foot of the mountains; and there, having given up their charge, "they returned to Ekron the same day." We were all deeply impressed with the simplicity and, at the same time, graphic power of the narrative.

Again we mounted, and led by our active guide, struck at a dashing pace down the gentle slope, then diagonally across the meadows and wheat-fields of Wady Surâr. The sun was already high in the heavens, and not a cloud as large as a man's hand to shade us from his fierce beams. The rainy season was past in the low plain of Philistia. A single cloud would now have been looked on as a wonder; and as for a shower, the peasants would have been as much terrified at it as the Israelites were, when, in answer to the prayer of Samuel, the Lord "sent thunder and rain" in the time of wheat-harvest (1 Sam. xii. 17). Through the centre of the wady, deeply furrowed in the alluvial soil, winds the torrent-bed of the Sorek, already dry, except here and there where water lay stagnant in little pools, half concealed by the dark foliage and gorgeous flowers of the oleander. The rivers of this southern land are mere winter torrents; the summer's sun dries them up, scorching the reeds, and rank grass, and bright flowers of early spring; just as Isaiah describes it: "The river shall be wasted and dried up; the reeds and flags shall wither. The paper reeds by the brooks, by the mouth of the brooks, and everything sown by the brooks, shall wither, be driven away, and be no more" (Isa. xix. 5–7). But when the autumn rain falls, the streams return to their beds, and the waters flow murmuring over the pebbles, and the dead plants burst forth into new life and verdure. How beautiful the prayer, and how appropriate the allusion of the Psalmist:—

> "As streams of water in the south,
> Our bondage, Lord, recall."—(Ps. cxxvi. 4).

Skirting the base of a low limestone ridge we opened up

the plain of Yebna, extending away on the right to the shores of the Mediterranean,—almost as smooth as the surface of the sea itself, and having a little hill, like an island in the centre, covered in part with the ruins of ancient Jabneh (2 Chron. xxvi. 6), and in part with the humble houses of its modern representative; in part, too, with the remains of a crusader's church. The plain was all astir with bands of reapers, men and women; and close behind them the gleaners, mostly young girls, reminding one of the faithful Ruth. The great proprietors were there too, moving about, like Boaz, from field to field among their labourers, clad in their scarlet cloaks. As we passed each group Selîm saluted them with an *Ullah makum*,—"The Lord be with you;" and they returned the invariable response, "The Lord bless thee." Not only are the manners and customs unchanged in this land, but the very words of salutation are what they were three thousand years ago (Ruth ii. 3, 4.)

Leaving this low-lying plain we ascended the bleak downs, where vast flocks of sheep and camels were browsing; and away on our left, nearly a mile distant, we saw the black tents of their Arab owners. They saw us also; and a party of ten or twelve splendidly mounted came upon us at full gallop, their spears glittering in the sunbeams, and their braided hair and flowing robes streaming behind them. Selîm rode out to meet them, and I followed to hear the parley. Before a word was spoken, Selîm and the Arab chief threw themselves from their horses and joined in a cordial embrace. The sight was not new to me, yet it was most interesting. Each rested his hands upon the shoulder of the other, and laid his head upon his neck; or, to use the expressive words of Scripture, "*He fell on his neck, and kissed him*" (Gen. xxvii. 33). We were now invited, and pressed with genuine Arab warmth to go to the camp. "O my lords," said the chief, addressing us, "pass not away, I pray you, from your servant. The sun is high; the day is

hot; honour his house with your presence; let him kill a sheep, and set bread before you, and then depart in peace." We respectfully declined, pleading the distance we had yet to ride, and the absence of our servants. Amid all their wildness and waywardness, a hospitality worthy of the old patriarchs is still practised by these sons of the desert. I have narrated the incident, and accurately translated the language used, because it illustrates such passages as Gen. xviii., and xix. 2.

ASHDOD.

On approaching Ashdod we were all charmed with the beauty of the site, and the wonderful richness of the country immediately around it. We had left the line of the great caravan road to Gaza and Egypt, and had turned into a beaten track leading straight to the village. It crosses a vale, some three miles wide, and extending far to the eastward;—perfectly level, and one unbroken expanse of golden corn, the richest I had anywhere seen in Palestine, rivalling even the best parts of Bashan. There was not a fence, nor tree, nor house upon it. Our path was bordered by the tall ripe grain; and our attendants plucked the ears as they rode along, "and did eat, rubbing them in their hands" (Luke vi. 1). We could here see how true to nature was the illustration in the parable of the sower,—"*And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside*" (Mark iv. 4). When the husbandman sows such fields as these, some seeds must necessarily fall upon the unfenced, beaten tracks, which traverse them in every direction.

The plain sweeps the northern base of the low, rounded hill on which once stood the royal city of Ashdod. The temples, palaces, and houses are all gone. The dust of centuries has covered them. Terraced orchards of figs and olives, apricots and pomegranates, now occupy their places, clothing the hill-side from base to summit. The modern village of *Esdûd*, a confused group of mud hovels, lies em bowered on the eastern slope. It bears the ancient name;

but we might truly change it to *Ichabod*, for its glory is departed.

We rode to it through winding lanes, hedged with the giant cactus, round whose shapeless stems, and quaint branches and leaves, the convolvulus and honeysuckle had woven garlands of bright flowers. The village is wretched in the extreme. Groups of hungry-looking men and squalid women lounged lazily in the dirty lanes, and on the dusty roofs, gazing listlessly on the strangers, and scarcely able to muster energy enough to curse the infidel Frank. As we looked on them and their miserable dwellings, the words of Zechariah flashed upon our memory: "A bastard shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines." We climbed to the top of the hill. The temple of Dagon, in which the ark of the Lord was put, must have stood here; for the sea is visible, and Dagon, "the fish god," was doubtless placed where he could look out over the element he was supposed to personify. Not a vestige of the temple is there now. Along the southern declivity old building stones, with fragments of columns and sculptured capitals, are piled up in the fences of little fields, and in the walls of goat and sheep pens, showing how time, and God's unchangeableness, have converted prophecy into history: "And the sea-coast shall be dwellings and cottages for shepherds, and *folds for flocks*."

How sad, and yet how glorious is the view from the top of that hill, beneath which the dust of a mighty city lies dishonoured! On the one side the noble plain, stretching away to the foot of Judah's mountains, here and there cultivated, but mostly neglected and desolate, yet all naturally rich as in the palmiest days of Philistia's power. On the other side a dreary, hopeless waste of drifting sand, washed away yonder by the waves of the Mediterranean, and here, at our feet, advancing with slow and silent, but resistless step, covering, and to cover, flower and tree, ancient ruin and modern hut, in one common tomb.

II.

"O thou sword of the Lord, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? Put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest, and be still. How can it be quiet, seeing the Lord hath given it a charge against Ashkelon, and against the sea-shore? There hath he appointed it."—Jer. xlvii. 6, 7.

We descended the hill of Ashdod, our horses leaping lightly as mountain goats from terrace to terrace, spurning the dust of the royal city, their iron hoofs ever and anon ringing upon fragments of broken pillars and sculptured stones. At the southern base of the hill, beside a miniature lake, are the walls of an old *khan*, and near it a dilapidated mosque. Beside the latter lies a richly carved sarcophagus of white marble, long ago opened and rifled. Here squatted a *dervish*—a dirty, ragged, miserable wretch—mumbling his senseless prayers to Allah, telling his beads, and swaying his body to and fro. He never turned his head nor moved a muscle as we rode up to him, but continued to look with a dreamy, vacant stare on the roofless khan, shattered mosque, and ruin-strewn site. He might have passed for the genius of Ashdod as he sat thus on the broken coffin. We saluted him, and he started as if awakened from sleep. He entered freely into conversation, and showed far more intelligence and knowledge than we could have given him credit for. He told us some legends of Ashdod's ancient glory, strangely mixing up in them the names of Daûd, Suleiman, Jalûd (Goliath), and Mohammed. We listened with interest to his stories as we took our mid-day rest beneath the shade of a mulberry tree. It was pleasing to hear incidents of Scripture history—distorted and exaggerated though they were—from the lips of this wild Moslem fanatic. *Dervishes* are a privileged class in the East; half madmen half saints, they are welcomed everywhere as the special favourites of Heaven; they have free access to every house, and never want for food or lodging. I have seen a Turkish pasha descend from his

place and kiss the hand of a dervish who had wandered into his council chamber; and when the mother of the late Sultan joined the pilgrim caravan to Mecca, the train of grandees that escorted her out of Damascus was led by a dervish, stark naked, mounted on a gorgeously caparisoned charger, and attended by four grooms in the royal livery! The clothes of these unfortunates, when they wear any, are always in tatters, and their persons and habits are disgustingly filthy. As I sat and looked at this squalid dervish amid the ruins of Ashdod, and as I reflected on the privileges enjoyed by his class, in ancient as well as modern times, I was strongly reminded of that romantic episode in the life of King David when he took refuge in another of Philistia's royal cities. He thought he might have escaped unnoticed; but he was recognised at once as the conqueror of Goliath. His fate appeared to be sealed. But "he feigned himself *mad* in their hands;" he "scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his *spittle fall down upon his beard*,"—he acted the *dervish*, in fact; he acted well; and his acting saved his life (1 Sam. xxi. 11–15).

An hour's gallop over bleak sandy downs, affording occasional glimpses of the bright sea on the right, brought us to the little village of Hamâmeh. The olive groves that encircle it are fringed with vineyards, now fresh and beautiful in their new and delicate foliage. We pressed our panting steeds along winding lanes, hedged with giant cactus, and shaded with dusky olives. Here again hedges and trees were all wreathed with convolvulus of every colour, while the vineyards, meadows, and corn-fields behind blushed with poppies and anemones. It was a lovely scene, and after the burning sandy downs, and the sun-scorched plains, we thought it a paradise:—The hedges so trim; the olive-shade so dense; the young vine shoots so green; the flowers so gay; the fields of melons and cucumbers so neat; the grain so wonderfully luxuriant. Here, we thought, at least the curse has not fallen on Philistia. A

sharp turn in the road suddenly and sadly dispelled this pleasing delusion. Close on the right now rose mounds of drifting sand. We could see that they are advancing,—slowly, steadily, — burying everything in their course. Fields of wheat, sown only a few months ago, were already partly covered. Vineyards were all but obliterated;—here and there a topmost branch, still retaining its foliage, waved over its own tomb. Further back, traces of olive groves, some of the larger trees standing in great bowls of sand, their trunks embedded, but the motion of the branches and the sweep of the wind beneath their foliage, had as yet kept the top free. Their graves were already made, however, and their days were numbered. Others had only just been covered up, and two or three green twigs projecting from the smooth sand-mounds marked their places.

It was a melancholy sight. It impressed me more deeply than anything I had ever seen. One is in some degree prepared for ruined palace and temple, desolate city and village. Man's proudest works are still perishable; but the face, the features, the resources of nature are generally supposed to be permanent. We rode on, gazing and wondering, our horses sinking deep at every footstep into the soft, fine sand. Then taking out my Bible, I could not refrain from reading to my companions the strange and terrible doom pronounced on this country by the Hebrew prophet five-and-twenty centuries ago:—"Woe unto the inhabitants of the sea-coasts! the word of the Lord is against you; O Canaan, the land of the Philistines, I will even destroy thee, and there shall be no inhabitant!" (Zeph. ii. 5.)

We had halted for some time on the top of a mound to get a wider view of the country and a clearer idea of the destruction impending over it. Selîm could not understand us. With manifest impatience he pointed once and again to the sun now sinking in glory behind the sand-hills. At last he could wait no longer. With a wild whoop, and a flourish of his rifle, he dashed his heavy stirrups into the

flanks of his fiery Arab, and disappeared through the entrance of a shady lane. We all followed at a hard gallop, and in a few minutes were beside our truant guide in the bustling streets of Mejdel, with a score of noisy dogs at our heels, and troops of children at the open doors and on the house-tops, screaming to their fellows to come and see the Franjîs with the kettles on their heads. Leaving the village behind, and winding through an olive grove, we came to an open glade, where our tents were pitched, and all ready for reception.

TENT LIFE.

What a charm there is in tent life on the hills and plains of Palestine! It presents such a contrast to the staid routine, alike of labour and recreation in our island home, to the rapidity and regularity of rail and hotel, that one can scarcely think himself in the same world. The sense of complete freedom, of absolute independence, is strange and new. Then there is the dash of danger, the exhilarating effect of pure air and exercise, and, above all, the magic influence of place—of sacred and historic associations ever crowding on the mind, suggested and awakened by names and scenes, all of them of hoary antiquity, and yet all familiar as household words and childhood's home. Every spot on which we tread is holy. Every ruin we pass by has a place in history. Every mountain and vale the eye roams over has a story written in the oldest and best of books. All we see belongs to and illustrates the past. The costumes of the people, the implements of husbandry, the houses, the tents, are all such as were familiar to Abraham; and the salutations are the very same with which Abraham was greeted when he visited the Philistine lords at Gerar, or bargained for the field of Machpelah at Hebron. We roam through these hallowed scenes all the day, and when evening comes, we select some grassy spot beside bubbling fountain or old well. We dismount; and then, as if by

magic, horses are picketted, tents are pitched, fires are kindled, and all got ready in true gipsy style—in patriarchal style, I should say—for thus the old patriarchs lived and travelled through these very hills and plains.

The sun goes down in a blaze of glory; the brief twilight declines to a faint purple streak along the western horizon; the stars come out like crystal lamps hung to the black vault of heaven, or it may be the moon sheds her clear silvery light on the landscape, making it look like a sepia-sketch by some master hand. Dusky figures now group themselves in a circle round the watch-fire, and we retire to our tents to write up our journals, or read again with new interest the story of the places we have visited during the day. The Bible is drawn forth, the best and most accurate of all Handbooks for Palestine; and old Reland, with his classic references and historic incidents, all ready to the scholar's hand. Here is the tale of Ekron and the ark. We now learn with surprise that Ashdod, which appeared, as we passed through it, so poor and so wretched, once stood a siege of twenty-nine years against the whole forces of Egypt under Psammiticus—the longest siege on record. We find, too, that Mejdel, the village beside us, is that *Migdal-gad*, which was allotted with fifteen other cities in this plain to the tribe of Judah (Josh. xv. 37). And it was also that *Magdala*, where Herodotus tells us Pharaoh-necho conquered the Syrians. For the classical scholar, the Bible-student, and the earnest Christian, tent-life and travel in Palestine have an unceasing charm. And in after years, amid other scenes, I can tell from sweet experience that the days and weeks and months spent there will appear as spots of bright sunshine on the cloudy landscape of memory.

THRESHING FLOORS AND THRESHING INSTRUMENTS.

The threshing-floors of Mejdel were near our tents. We went over to them in the grey twilight. They are circles of smooth ground fifteen to twenty yards in diameter.

Each had on it a heap of newly-reaped grain; and round the outer edges of the heaps were broad flattened belts, where the "instruments" had already been at work. Labour had ceased for the night, and the oxen were feeding freely on the half-trodden grain, as if their masters were resolved to obey to the letter the Scripture command, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn" (Deut. xxv. 4). The "threshing-instruments" are flat, heavy, wooden slabs, some five feet long by three wide, slightly turned up in front. The under surface is thickly studded with knobs of hard stone or iron. A massive prison-door, with its rows of projecting nail-heads, will give the best idea of a *mowrej*, as the instrument is now called. Each is drawn by a "yoke of oxen." The driver stands on the mowrej; and the *goad*, with which he urges on and directs the movements of his team, is a formidable weapon. It is sometimes ten feet long, and has a sharp iron point. We could now see that the feat of Shamgar, who "*slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox-goad*," was not so very wonderful as some have been accustomed to think (Judges iii. 31). The oxen advance in front, "*treading out*" the grain, and the *mowrej* follows, crushing and cutting the straw with its "*teeth*," till it is reduced almost to dust (2 Kings xiii. 7). How graphic are the words of Isaiah, "Behold I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having *teeth:* thou shalt thresh the mountains, and *beat them small*, and thou shalt make the hills *as chaff!*" (xli. 15.) How terrible must have been the cruelty inflicted by Damascus on Gilead, when Amos thus describes it: "They have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron!" (ii. 3.)

The people were at their evening meal. Each group squatted in a circle round a huge bowl of *burghul*—masters and servants, with equal freedom, tearing off little bits of thin soft bread, and using them as spoons to lift the savoury stew — thus dipping their "*morsels*" (Ruth ii 14), or

"*sops*" (John xiii. 26), into the dish. It was a most interesting scene, again bringing vividly before our minds the narrative of the threshing-floors of Boaz at Bethlehem.

ASCALON.

With the first dawn we were in the saddle, and bounding away through the groves of Mejdel. The morning air was fragrant with the perfume of wild flowers, and filled with the sweet, soft "voice of the turtle," which seemed to float from tree to tree—now behind, now in front, now close on the right, now far away on the left, as if given back by a thousand echoes. The groves and fields are soon left behind, and we enter the sandy waste. Giving our eager horses the rein, they plunge on madly, over ridge and through hollow. The Mediterranean soon came into view; and a noble view it was — a boundless expanse of blue water,

> "Canopied by the blue sky,
> So cloudless, clear, and purely beautiful,
> That God alone was to be seen in heaven."

Before us, on the shore, was a green oasis, in the midst of the white waste of sand. Orchards of apples and apricots, palm trees rising gracefully over them, and the soft and varied foliage of vines and pomegranates forming a dense underwood. Behind this desert paradise, and protecting it from the all-devouring drift, rose what appeared to be a line of jagged cliffs. We rode straight to the oasis, and entering, discovered in the midst of it the little village of Jûreh. Looking up we now saw that the cliffs resolved themselves into the ruined ramparts of Ascalon. We rode on. Our horses saw the rugged heights and seemed to know their task. Onward and upward they proceed, now gathering their feet close together on a block of masonry, now springing lightly as gazelles across a chasm, now scrambling painfully up the shattered wall; and at length, with a leap and a snort of triumph, gaining the very summit of the battlements.

What a scene of desolation there burst at once upon our view! With all my previous experience of Syrian ruins—and I had seen Bozrah and Kenath, Gadara and Samaria, Baalbek and Palmyra—I was not prepared for this. Such utter, terrible desolation I had never met before. The site of Ascalon is in form like an old Roman theatre—the sea in front, and the ground once occupied by the city, rising gradually and uniformly to the wall, which runs in a semicircle from shore to shore. The whole site was before us. Not a house, nor a fragment of a house remains standing. Not a foundation of temple or palace can be traced entire. One half of it is occupied with miniature fields, and vineyards, and fig-orchards; rubbish-mounds here and there among them, and great heaps of hewn stones, and broken shafts, and sculptured slabs of granite and marble. The rude fences exhibit similar painful evidences of ancient wealth and magnificence.—The other half of the site was still more fearfully desolate. It is so thickly covered with drift sand, that not a heap of rubbish, not a vestige of a ruin remains visible, save here and there where the top of a column rises like a tombstone above the smooth surface. The sand is fast advancing; it has already covered some of the highest fragments of the southern and western wall, and ere a quarter of a century has passed, the *site of Ascalon* will have been blotted out for ever.

Dismounting, I took out my Bible and read the doom pronounced upon Ascalon by the prophets Zechariah and Zephaniah, —"*Askelon shall not be inhabited*"—"*Askelon shall be* A DESOLATION" (Zech. iv. 5; Zeph. ii. 4). Ascalon *is* a desolation; it *shall not be*, CANNOT be, inhabited! As we stood there and looked, we said to each other, "The eye of the omniscient God alone could have foreseen such a doom as this."

We lingered long among the ruins of Ascalon; visiting every rubbish-heap, and inspecting every column. The walls were interesting to us, not so much from their high

antiquity, or the almost miraculous way in which they have been rent and shattered and tumbled down in huge fragments, as from the fact that they were last built, in crusading times, by our lion-hearted King Richard.

GAZA.

Gaza is ten miles from Ascalon as the crow flies. In three hours we were at our tents, which we found ready pitched in an olive grove some distance from the town. We had a long evening before us, and sufficient time to see all the objects of interest in and around the place. We were anxious to gain admission to the great mosque—the only building of any historic note now standing in Gaza. It was formerly a Christian church, built by the liberality of the Empress Eudoxia, about A.D. 406. We were disappointed, as we found the fanatical populace prepared to resist by main force any attempt at intrusion.

Gaza still contains about 15,000 inhabitants. The town resembles a cluster of large villages. The principal one stands on the top of a low hill, and the others lie on the plain at its base. The hill appears to be composed in a great measure of the accumulated ruins of successive cities. We can see portions of massive walls and the ends of old columns cropping up everywhere from the rubbish. There are no walls or defences of any kind; and the inhabitants have long been known as a fierce and lawless set of fanatics. Between Gaza and the sea is a belt of sand, about three miles wide. A mile east of the town a ridge of low hills runs parallel to the coast. Between the sand and these hills the ground is of unrivalled fertility, and supplies the town with abundance of the choicest fruit and vegetables.

As we stood examining the architecture of the great mosque, which occupies the crown of the hill, an old Moslem sheikh came up, and said, pointing with his pipe to a deep cutting in a mound of rubbish near us, "There is

Samson's Gate." "Who is Samson?" we asked. "A giant who came to Ghuzzeh; and when the infidels who then lived here shut the gate to keep him in, he pulled it off, killed the keepers with a blow of the bar, and carried the whole away under his arm." "Where did he take the gate to?" we again inquired. "To the top of that hill where you see the *wely*,"—turning the end of his long pipe to the highest point of the ridge to the eastward.

The sheikh was in all probability right. Whether or no, we were gratified to hear such a tradition lingering on this spot. I wandered away alone through the gardens and orchards, and climbed Samson's Hill. I was amply repaid for my toil. The view is wide and most interesting. The town lay at my feet, with its circuit of verdure; beyond it the white sandy downs; and farther still, the Mediterranean, gleaming in the sunlight. On the south, the great road to Egypt, so often trodden by the Pharaohs, running away along the plain, a meandering line. The valley of *Gerar* was visible,—a depression in the plain, extending from the coast far inland. I could see in it the black tents of the Arabs, who now feed their flocks on the pastures once so highly prized by Abraham and Isaac, (Gen. xx. 1–16; xxvi.) On the east and north-east was spread out the great undulating plain of Philistia, patched with green and red in the foreground, but dissolving into a uniform grey in the distance, and shut in in the far distance by the mountains that encircle Hebron, now ruddy with the evening sun. "Samson took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and put them upon his shoulders, and *carried them up to the top of an hill that is before Hebron*" (Judges xvi. 3). I was now convinced the sheikh's tradition was true, and that I stood on the very spot where Samson deposited the gates of Gaza.

III.

> "In many a heap the ground
> Heaves, as if Ruin in a frantic mood
> Had done his utmost. Here and there appears,
> As left to show his handy-work not ours,
> An idle column, a half-buried arch,
> A wall of some great temple."

The road from Gaza to Jerusalem "*is desert*," as we learn from the incidental remark of Luke (Acts viii. 26), and as I can testify from personal observation. It runs across a dreary, parched plain, which, on the right and left, extends to the horizon, and in front is shut in by the blue mountains of Judah. On emerging from the olive groves of Gaza, the desert was before us—bare, white, and monotonous, without a solitary tree, or the "shadow of a great rock," or a single patch of verdure. As we rode on we had overhead the bright sky and blazing sun; and beneath, the flinty soil, reflecting burning rays that scorched the weeds and stunted camel-thorn, and made them crackle like charred sticks under our horses' feet. As the day advanced, the *sirocco* came upon us, blowing across the great "Wilderness of Wandering." At first it was but a faint breath, hot and parching, as if coming from a furnace. It increased slowly and steadily. Then a thick haze, of a dull yellow or brass colour, spread along the southern horizon, and advanced, rising and expanding, until it covered the whole face of the sky, leaving the sun, a red globe of fire, in the midst. We now knew and felt that it was the fierce *simoom.* In a few moments, fine impalpable sand began to drift in our faces, entering every pore. Nothing could exclude it. It blew into our eyes, mouths, and nostrils, and penetrated our very clothes, causing the skin to contract, the lips to crack, and the eyes to burn. Respiration became difficult. We sometimes gasped for breath; and then the hot wind and hotter sand rushed into our mouths like a stream of liquid fire. We tried to urge on our

horses; but though chafing against curb and rein only an hour before, they were now almost insensible to whip and spur. We looked and longed for shelter from that pitiless storm, and for water to slake our burning thirst; but there was none. The plain extended on every side, smooth as a lake, to the circle of yellow haze that bounded it. No friendly house was there; no rock or bank; no murmuring stream nor solitary well. It seemed to us as if the prophetic curse pronounced by the Almighty on a sinful and apostate nation was now being fulfilled. We could see, at least, in the whole face of nature, in earth and sky and storm, how terrible and how graphic that curse was:—"*Thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron. The Lord shall make the rain of the land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee*" (Deut. xxviii. 23, 24).

LACHISH AND EGLON.

The storm was at its height when we saw, rising up before us, a low white mound. As we approached we could distinguish heaps of ruins and rubbish; and on reaching it, and pressing our panting steeds up its shelving sides in search of some rude shelter, we scrambled over large hewn stones, and fragments of marble columns, with here and there a piece of carved cornice or sculptured pediment protruding from the dust. Our guide had dashed on in front, and we eagerly followed, heedless of stones, and pits, and prostrate houses—in silence, but hoping for some kind of relief. A cry of joy burst from the whole party as, on passing the crest of the tell, we saw a low broken wall, and not far from it a number of stone troughs round the mouth of an old well. The well was dry, but we crouched down under the shelter of the wall, and our poor horses came close to our feet, lowering their heads and shutting their eyes to escape the drifting sand. In about an hour the simoom had spent its fury, and we prepared to resume our

route. "What place is this?" I said to Selîm, who lay beside me, coiled up in the folds of his capote. "Um Lâkis," he replied. Um Lâkis! This then is all that marks the site and bears the name of *Lachish*, which Joshua besieged and captured (Josh x. 31–33). Starting to my feet I ran to the top of the mound. Round the spot where I stood lay the heaped-up ruins and the dust of a once great and royal city, now deserted and utterly desolate. From the ruins I looked away out over the plain where the Israelites were marshalled, having approached from the north; then I turned to the south, to see the route by which the troops of "Horam, King of Gezer, came up to help Lachish." The brief conflict, and the decisive victory of Joshua, must have been distinctly seen by the inhabitants. And that plain which stretches away northward to the horizon, was the scene of another event—one of the most mysterious and terrible recorded in history. The vast army of Sennacherib had "come up" against "the fenced cities of Judah." They encamped first against Lachish, and then marched on Libnah, a neighbouring city (2 Kings xviii. 13, *et seq.*) The monarch, in the pride of his power, when at the head of his victorious soldiers, dared to defy the God of Israel. "Who are they," he asked, "among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?" The Lord himself replied to the impious question:—"And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred four-score and five thousand" (xix. 35).

> "Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green,
> That host with their banners at sunset were seen;
> Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown,
> That host on the morrow lay withered and strewn.
>
> For the Angel of death spread his wings on the blast,
> And breathed on the face of the foe as he passed;
> And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
> And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever were still!"

May not the angel of death have spread his wings on the blast of some such storm as that which we had just encountered? Had it been only a little more violent, and of a little longer duration, no army, exposed to its fury on such a plain, could have survived it.

"From Lachish Joshua passed on to Eglon," and so did we. We were now in the track of the great conqueror, treading the very soil which he trod more than thirty centuries ago, and visiting the sites of those royal cities which he wrested from the Canaanite kings. As we read the brief narrative of his marches and his victories, we were struck with the minute accuracy of his topography. The distance from Lachish to Eglon is just about two miles; and it was thus easy for the Israelites, after the capture of the former, to march on the latter, and "take it the same day" (Josh. x. 34, 35).

Eglon, like Lachish, is utterly desolate. It is a shapeless mass of ruins and rubbish, strewn over a rounded hillock, with two or three light marble shafts standing up among them, like tombstones in an old cemetery.

Still we rode on eastward over the undulating desolate plain. Our course lay along the southern border of Philistia, where the plain has been overrun for many a century by the wandering Ishmaelites of Et-Tîh, and where extensive cultivation and settled habitation are alike impossible. What it is now it appears to have always been — debateable land. From the line of our route southward to the valley of Gerar, Abraham and Isaac pastured their flocks; and their shepherds disputed with the Philistines about the wells they dug. The pastures, then as now, were free and abundant; but springs of water were too rare and precious to be retained or surrendered without a struggle. In our ride of more than thirty miles that day we did not meet a human being; and from the moment we left the fields of Gaza till we passed in among the rocky spurs of the hills of Judah, we did not see a single sign of human life. We

saw many towns and villages in ruins—white mounds of rubbish — on the grey plain. The words of the prophet were constantly in our minds and on our tongues. "O Canaan, the land of the Philistines, I will even destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant" (Zeph. ii. 5). Some miles further north the desolation is not so complete. I had an opportunity during another tour, of visiting two or three little villages still remaining there, and of seeing noble fields of grain round them.

The sun was setting behind us as we crossed the ridge that bounds the pleasant vale of Beit Jibrîn. We had now left the *Shephelah*, "the low country," with its white downs and wide reaches of bare, desolate plain, and rich corn fields, and we had entered the "hill country," with its rocky ridges and conical tells, and shrubberies of dwarf ilex, and green winding glens. The contrast was great, and the change pleasant. Halting beneath the massive ruins of Beit Jibrîn our tents were soon pitched, and we felt the sweets of rest and sleep after a day of unusual fatigue and suffering.

THE BORDER LAND OF JUDAH AND PHILISTIA.

When the stranger travels through the hill country, which separates the Judean range from the Philistine plain, his attention is arrested by many objects which seem strange and almost inexplicable. The rich plains are in a great measure deserted; yet the wildest recesses of these hills are studded with villages. The people seem to have selected for their abode the most rugged and inaccessible localities they could possibly find. One would fancy they had something of the spirit of the old hermits in them. Here are villages built amid labyrinths of rocks; there they are clinging like swallows' nests to the sides of precipices; while away yonder, they are perched like feudal castles on the tops of hills. Often, too, when riding through yawning ravines, between beetling cliffs, where one would think no

human being would voluntarily dwell, or could find means of life, we are startled by groups of children, most of them naked, springing out from holes and caves, and shouting their wonder or delight at the strange costume of the travellers. Looking up we see, far overhead, vines hanging in festoons from the brows of jagged rocks, and miniature corn-fields on shelving hill-tops, round which the eagles sweep in graceful circles. We observe, too, that every ancient town and village was a fortress; and that every modern hamlet is capable of defence. Another remarkable characteristic of this region is the multitude of its caves. They are found wherever there is a trace of human habitation—hewn in the soft calcareous rock, and so constructed as to form secure magazines for grain, and safe places of abode for the inhabitants in time of danger. The solution of these anomalies is, that this has always been *border land.* Every foot of it was keenly contested by the Israelites and Philistines. At a later period the Idumeans invaded the south and west of Palestine. From the fall of the Jewish power to the present day, an unceasing warfare has been waged between the roving freebooters of the plain and the settled dwellers on the mountains.

The Bethogabra of the Jews, the Eleutheropolis of the Greeks, the Beigiberin of the Crusaders, and the Beit Jibrîn of the Arabs, was for more than fifteen centuries the chief fortress of the border land,—the key of the mountains, and the defence of the great roads from Jerusalem and Hebron to Gaza. The massive ruins of its castle, among which the first dawn of the morning found us wandering, show its ancient importance. But we were still more deeply interested in the caverns excavated in the rocky banks of the vale south of the ruins. Having procured lights and a guide we closely examined the three principal groups. They are unique in plan and character,—altogether different from the temple-tombs of Egypt, and the beautiful rock chambers of Petra, and the intricate sepulchres of

Jerusalem. Here are long ranges of bell-shaped chambers, some of them seventy feet in diameter, and sixty high, connected by arched doorways, and winding subterranean passages, and long flights of steps ascending and descending. Many are entirely dark; others are lighted by a circular aperture at the top; the roofs of others have partially fallen in, leaving jagged openings through which the sunlight streams, and long brambles hang down. Side chambers, like galleries, are occasionally seen opening high up in the wall. Near and among them, also, are tombs, ranging from twenty to sixty feet in length, with tiers of recesses for bodies on each side. It is a strange, romantic spot this vale of Beit Jibrîn. One might spend days roaming through its mysterious caves, which look like subterranean towns. The remains on the surface, too, are well worth the attention of the antiquarian and the architect. Cyclopean foundations, indicating the Jewish or Phœnician age, solid walls, and deep wells of the Roman period, the light and picturesque Gothic of Crusading times, are all displayed in groups through this valley. And away at its southern extremity is a bare conical hill, honey-combed with caverns. That is the site of Mareshah, where Asa defeated the army of the Ethiopians, (2 Chron. xiv.)

Sending tents and baggage direct to Beit Nettîf, on the side of the Valley of Elah, we set out with our guide to explore the border land between Beit Jibrîn and Bethshemesh. On we sped at a dashing pace, invigorated by the mountain air—up rocky banks, over rounded ridges with bare crowns of naked limestone, through tangled brakes of prickly ilex and wild plum, and across green vales, down which wound dry torrent beds, covered with white glistening pebbles, and fringed with the acacia and oleander. Kudna, Dhikrîn, and Deir Dubbân were visited in succession, and their caverns inspected, similar in all respects to those above described, except that some of them are now converted into cisterns, on which the people depend for a supply of water.

GATH.

One object of my tour in Philistia was to discover, if possible, the long lost site of Gath. Since the days of Jerome it has been unknown; and even the wonderful geographical skill of Robinson was unable to trace it out. I need not here detail those incidental allusions and topographical notices of the sacred writers, and those accurate measurements and references of Eusebius and Jerome, which serve to indicate the district in which it must have stood. It is enough to say that I was satisfied they all pointed to some place on the route we were now pursuing. It was, therefore, with an interest approaching to excitement we surveyed the position and examined the remains of every village and ruin we passed. But from the moment we gained the crest of the first ridge north of Beit Jibrîn, there was one prominent object away before us which attracted our chief attention—a bare, white, conical hill, standing on the very edge of the great plain, and yet rising high enough to command all the rocky spurs up to the very base of the mountains. As valley after valley was passed, it became more and more conspicuous. At length we reached it, and rode over rubbish heaps and terraced vineyards to its summit. The hill rises about one hundred feet above the ridge that joins it on the east, and some two hundred over the level plain that sweeps its western base. It is crowned with the foundations of an old castle, and round its sides are numerous remains of ancient buildings. The view from it is most extensive. The whole plain of Philistia was spread out before us, variegated with fields of yellow corn, and red fallow land, and long reaches of grey wastes. Away on the south-western horizon the white downs of Gaza and Ascalon mingle with the glittering waters of the Mediterranean. On the west we could see the little hill of Ashdod dark with olive groves: further to the right Ekron; and further still the white tower of Ramleh. The moun-

tains of Judah rise up on the east in dark frowning masses; every peak crowned with village or ruin, whose name carries us away thousands of years back.

The modern name of this hill, *Tell es-Safieh*, gives no clue to its ancient name. The Crusaders built a castle on it in the twelfth century, and called it *Blanche-garde;* and the surrounding country became the scene of some of the daring adventures of Richard *Cœur-de-lion*. This hill, if fortified—as it evidently was from the earliest ages—would be the key of the Philistine plain on the east. Watchmen from its summit could see every hostile band that would attempt to break forth from the mountain defiles. The warlike Philistines would never have overlooked a position so commanding, and naturally so strong; one so well-fitted also for defending those vast corn-fields in which lay their wealth and their power. From the moment I set my foot upon Tell es-Safieh, I felt convinced that it is the site of the royal city of Gath.

What a life-like vividness did this discovery throw on some of the most romantic incidents of early Jewish history! The gigantic Anakim were annihilated by Joshua throughout the whole land; "Only in Gaza, and *Gath*, and in Ashdod," those impregnable fortresses they remained (Josh. xi. 22). And from this place Goliath—one of the last of the giant race—marched out in his panoply of mail, the acknowledged champion of the Philistines, to threaten and defy the Israelites in the neighbouring "valley of Elah," which we shall visit anon, (1 Sam. xvii.) And hither, a few years later, David came, a homeless refugee. When recognised he feigned himself mad, and easily escaped into those thickets that cover the hills around. I had often wondered why David should have fled to Gath; and why, having at length propitiated the Philistine lords, he should have made it his home. Now, on the spot, I saw the reason. Here he was perfectly secure from Saul. He was on the very border of his kingdom, besides, within a

few hours' march of his native Bethlehem; thus able to keep up an uninterrupted communication with his friends through those mountain passes, and ready at a moment's notice to take advantage of any turn of events that might seem to favour his ambitious designs.

Descending through the terraced vineyards that cover the whole slopes of Tell es-Safieh, we were struck with the appropriateness of the old name *Gath*, "wine-press," for such a site even yet. An hour's hard ride up a green vale, fragrant with thyme, and spangled with wild flowers, brought us into the lower part of the "Valley of Elah." Before us, on the crest of a rocky ridge, was Jarmuth. On our right rose the ruin-crowned tell of Zacharîeh, doubtless the site of ancient Azekah. Here then we were close to the place where Joshua captured and hanged the five kings, (Josh. x.) After the defeat of Gibeon, and the rout of Beth-horon, the fugitives ran along the borders of the plain "to Azekah and Makkedah." Hotly pursued, they seem to have made for Jarmuth. They had got so far up the valley of Elah; but now, wearied and way-worn, they were unable to attempt the steep ascent; and seeing the foe close behind they hid themselves "in a cave at Makkedah;" one of those caves with which the whole region abounds. Their fate is well known. About a mile above this spot, on the right side of the valley, is a ruin called El-Klêdiah, answering to the position, and bearing some resemblance to the name of Makkedah. Two hours more over rugged hills brought us to

BETH-SHEMESH.

Beth-shemesh, "The House of the Sun," does not contain a single house now; heaps of ruins strewn over a broad ridge, and half concealed by thistles and poppies, and bright marigolds, mark the site of the old city. In modern times its name has been somehow changed to *Ain-esh-Shems*, "The Fountain of the Sun;" and yet, strange to say, there is no fountain here either. But the situation is a noble one.

A broad rich vale runs down on each side of the swelling ridge meeting in front, and then opening a mile or two beyond into the great plain.

We had around us at Beth-shemesh the native country of Samson, and from its ruins we could see the scenes of some of the leading events of his strange life. Beyond the fertile valley on the north rises a steep hill, crowned with a Muslem *wely* and a small village,—that is Zorah, the home of Manoah, and Samson's birth-place (Judges xiii. 2). It overlooks the whole Philistine plain, and most of the border land. Samson must thus have been familiar from childhood with border raids and border warfare; he must have been familiar with the power and the tyranny of the Philistines. Many a band of them, doubtless, did he see marching up the glen beneath his father's house, and returning again laden with spoils of his brethren. Many an act of rapine, and cruel outrage, and barbarous murder, had left an impress deep and lasting on his mind, stirring him in after years to revenge. Some two miles west of Beth-shemesh, on the borders of the plain, is Timnath, where Samson got his first wife (xiv. 1). It was in "going down" from the heights of Zorah to Timnath—somewhere along the rugged banks of that intervening valley—that he killed the young lion. That valley itself, now called *Sorâr*, is most probably the "Valley of Sorek," where the infamous Delilah dwelt (xvi. 4). It was among these hills, and the recesses of those rugged mountains eastward, that he caught the "three hundred jackals" (such appears to be the true meaning of the Hebrew word), and tying them tail to tail, with torches between them, let them go at harvest time among the standing corn of the Philistines. What havoc they must have made as they sped from field to field, from vineyard to olive grove! And with what wild delight must Samson have viewed, from the heights of Zorah, the streams of fire sweeping onward and outward in every direction, and the conflagration spreading from stream to

stream, until the whole plain was one sheet of flame! Poor Samson was betrayed at last:—

> "Ask for this great deliverer now, and find him
> Eyeless in Gaza, at the mill with slaves,
> Himself in bonds under Philistian yoke."

Fatal bondage his to the Philistine lords! Savage cruelty theirs, but to be returned ten-fold on their own devoted heads! Thus does Milton describe the last act of Samson's life:—

> "Oh, dearly bought revenge, yet glorious!
> Living or dying thou hast fulfilled
> The work for which thou wast foretold
> To Israel, and now liest victorious
> Among thy slain, self-killed;
> Not willingly, but tangled in the fold
> Of dire necessity, whose law in death conjoined
> Thee with thy slaughtered foes in number more
> Than all thy life had slain before."

Samson's mangled body was brought up from Gaza by his brethren, and buried on his native hill, "between Zorah and Eshtaol" (xvi. 31).

We lingered long amid the ruins of Beth-shemesh, reading and pondering these and other incidents of sacred history, which the places round us naturally suggested. The sun went down into the waters of the Mediterranean in a halo of glory. The purple shadows of the wild glens gradually waxed deeper and darker; and the jagged outline of hills and mountains was drawn in bold relief upon the blue sky. The bright stars came out one by one. Still we lingered, reluctant to turn away for ever from a spot so strangely interesting. A long, low, plaintive wail suddenly broke the deep silence of the mountains over us. Another, like an echo, answered it from the valley. Then another, and another, louder, and clearer, and nearer, until mountain, glen, and distant plain resounded with a ceaseless howl of jackals. They seem to be as numerous yet as they were in Samson's days.

At length Selîm urged us to mount, reminding us that

Beit Nettîf was still far distant, and that the road over the mountains was both difficult and dangerous. For the danger we cared not; experience had long ago taught us that brigands never infest the mountain roads by night. But we had only ridden a very short distance when we found that the path, if path there ever had been from Beth-shemesh to Beit Nettîf, was hopelessly lost. Our situation was anything but pleasant. There was no village within miles of us. We thought of a bivouac; but our poor horses had eaten nothing since the morning, and there was neither food nor water for them here. On we pressed, therefore, over rock and bank, through thicket and torrent-bed, guided in our course by the stars, and trusting to the sagacity of our horses for the rest. For nearly three weary hours we rode on, gradually ascending, and then reached the top of a rugged ridge, and saw lights moving about before us. We fired a shot, and it was immediately answered. A shout from Selîm was replied to by our muleteers and servants, who had come in search of us. My readers may well suppose that having been more than thirteen hours in the saddle we were ready for dinner and bed on reaching our tents.

THE VALLEY OF ELAH.

The morning sun had already bathed in ruddy light the mountain tops round Beit Nettîf, and thrown their shadows far out across Philistia's plain, when mounting our horses we began the steep descent, through terraced vineyards and olive groves, to "the Valley of Elah." A long reach of the valley lay at our feet. It is about a quarter of a mile wide, with rich alluvial bottom, and sides rising steeply, but not precipitously, to the height of five hundred feet or more. Through the centre winds a torrent bed, now dry, but thickly covered with smooth white stones, and fringed with shrubs. On reaching the valley we turned to the right and rode about a mile down it through corn fields.

Then we saw on the left bank above us the grey ruins of Shocoh, and we knew that we now stood on the battle-field of David and Goliath. "The Philistines gathered together their armies to battle, and were gathered together *at Shocoh*. . . . And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and pitched by *the Valley of Elah*, and set the battle in array against the Philistines. And the Philistines stood *on a mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side; and there was a valley between them*" (1 Sam. xvii. 1, *et seq.*) We saw the positions of the two armies at a single glance. The Philistines were ranged along the side of the ridge at Shocoh, and the Israelites occupied the declivity opposite. Between them lay the valley,—then called *Elah*, from its "terebinth" trees; and now *Sumpt*, from its "acacias." Down that left bank came Goliath, his brazen armour glittering in the sunbeams; down the opposite bank came David with his sling and staff. Reaching the torrent-bed he selected "five smooth stones," and put them in his scrip. "Am I a dog," cried the haughty Philistine, looking at David's boyish face and simple equipments, "that thou comest to me with staves?" "I come to thee," replied the youth, "in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, whom thou hast defied." The stone was fixed; the sling was whirled round by a skilful hand; with a sharp twang the missile flew and pierced the brain of the impious giant. His own sword did the rest. According to the custom of the time, David took the head and the spoils of his foe, and carried them back to his comrades. The Philistines fled in confusion; and the Israelites raising a shout of triumph hurried away in pursuit.

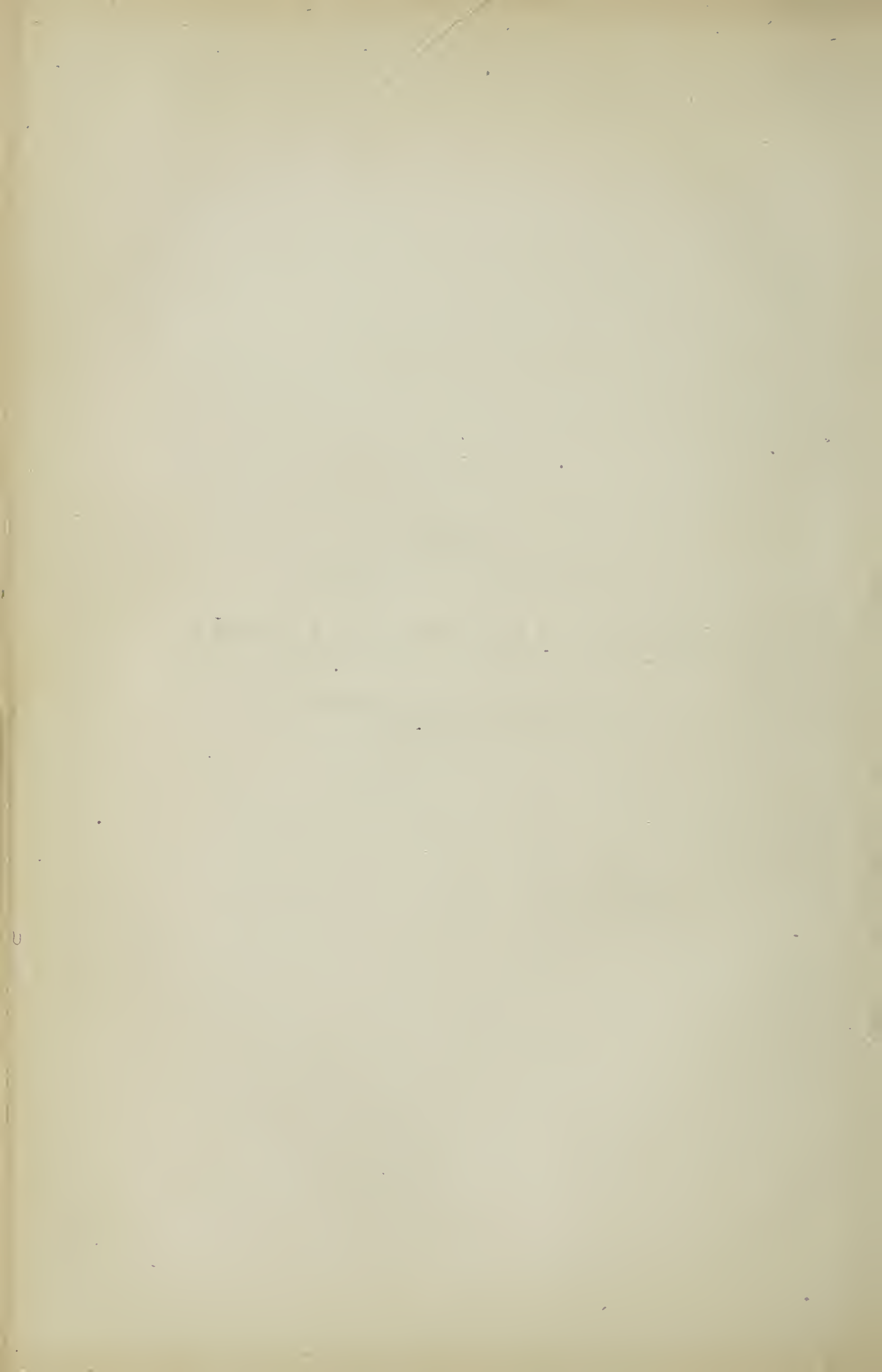
I too went down into that torrent-bed, as near as I could judge to the spot where David "chose the five smooth stones," and I brought away "a smooth stone," which I still retain as a memorial of the battle-field, and of one of the happiest days of my life. Then turning from the Val-

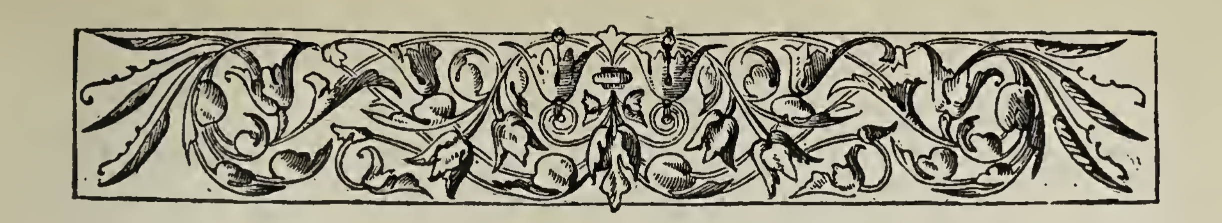
ley of Elah, and from border land, I struck up the rugged path that leads over the mountains to Hebron; and thus ended my RIDE THROUGH THE LAND OF THE PHILISTINES. That ride, with another along a different route made at a later period, gave me a clearer understanding of some of the most interesting episodes in Scripture history, than I could ever have obtained otherwise. The early intercourse of the patriarchs with the Philistine lords, the campaign of Joshua, the restoration of the ark, the romantic story of Samson, and the brilliant victory of David, became, when read on the scenes of action, glowing life pictures. Nowhere else in all my wanderings through Bible lands did the harmony between the Land and the Book appear more striking, more perfect, than in the plain of Philistia.



GALILEE AND THE SEA-COAST.







I.

Sharon and Carmel.

"The glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, *the excellency of Carmel and Sharon*: they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God."—Isa. xxxv. 2.

SHARON and Carmel are enshrined in sacred poetry. In addition to the holy associations that cluster round them as scenes of Bible history, they bring up before the mind's eye plains spangled with "the rose of Sharon," meadows powdered with "the lily of the valley," uplands waving with "forests," and mountains crowned with "the excellency of Carmel." Nor are one's glowing expectations much disappointed when he traverses Sharon, or climbs the heights of Carmel in early spring. The plain stretches out before him as far as the eye can follow it, in gentle undulations of luxuriant pasture, varied here and there by a clump of old forest trees, or a thicket of canes and shrubs round a fountain, or a grey tell strewn with the ruins of some primeval city. And the mountain chain rises in easy slopes, wooded from base to summit; seamed by many a glen, and broken by many a cliff. The curse has fallen lightly upon Sharon and Carmel. Still it is true that the great cities which once lined the sea-board are gone. The restless waves dash in sheets of foam over the ingulphed ruins of its once famous harbours. Dor and Cæsarea, Hepha and Athlit, are no more. Towns and villages which thickly studded in ancient days inland plain and mountain side, are gone too. Corn fields, olive groves, and vineyards are now few and far between; and even the pastures are deserted save by

the flocks of a few poor nomads. Notwithstanding the grass, and the flowers, and the beauty of Sharon, it "*is* like a wilderness." "Its highways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceaseth" (Isa. xxxiii. 9). And notwithstanding Carmel's waving woods and green forest glades, it *has* "shaken off its fruit,"—the fruit of human industry. The mountain still deserves its ancient name, "the fruitful." The "excellency (*beauty*) of Carmel" is yet conspicuous; but even there, in the loveliest glades and richest dells, solitude keeps unbroken sabbath.

SOUTHERN SHARON.

My first view of Sharon was from the sea. From the vessel's deck I looked with as much eagerness as an old Crusader on the white strand, and the sandy downs, and the broad plain, shut in on the east by the blue hills of Samaria. The cape of Carmel was far behind me, dipping gracefully, but not so "bluff" as is usually represented in pictures, into the Mediterranean. Away far ahead a little white rounded hill began to rise slowly from a flat coast. "What hill is that?" I asked of the French officer at my side. "That is Joppa." "And those ruins we passed some time ago, which you can yet see yonder glittering in the sun—what are they?" "The ruins of Cæsarea," was the reply. Historic names are wonderfully suggestive. Especially so when connected with sacred history, and when the eye first rests on the places to which they are attached. Memory then becomes a diorama. It brings before us the great events of other ages. So it was with me. In succession I saw the ships of Hiram conducting rafts of cedar and pine along the sea to Joppa for Solomon's Temple. I saw the great merchant vessel of Adramyttium leaving the harbour of Cæsarea, while on its deck stood the Apostle of the Gentiles, guarded by Roman soldiers, and with fettered hands waving a final adieu to weeping friends. I saw the proud galleys of the Crusaders bearing down

upon the shore, crowded with mail-clad knights, Europe's best and bravest warriors, bent on the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre. And then, when the picture vanished, my eye rested on deserted harbours, ruined cities, a dreary desolate shore, silent alike to the bustle of commerce and the din of battle; as if to show that while man is mortal, his glory fleeting, and all his works perishable, God's Word is true and can never fail. Five and twenty centuries ago that Word pronounced the doom of Palestine: "I beheld, and, lo, the *fruitful place* (Hebrew *Carmel*) was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord, and by his fierce anger. For thus hath the Lord said, The whole land shall be desolate" (Jer. iv. 26).

I landed at *Joppa*, a bustling town of five thousand inhabitants, beautifully situated on the western slope of a hill, looking down into the blue waters of the Mediterranean. It is still the port of Jerusalem; but it has no harbour, and it is only under favourable circumstances of wind and weather a vessel can ride at the distance of a mile or so from the shore. Guided by a young Jew I went at once to "the house of Simon the tanner." The house is modern, but it probably occupies the old site, for its Mohammedan owner considers it sacred. It stands "by the sea-side," as St. Luke tells us (Acts x. 6); and from its roof—"flat" now as in ancient times—I looked out on that same boundless sea on which the apostle must have looked when "he went up upon the house-top to pray." The hour too was the same—"the sixth hour," or noon. There was something deeply impressive in being thus brought as it were into immediate connection with that wondrous vision which the Lord employed as a key to open the Gentile world to Christ's Gospel.

From Simon's house I went through crooked streets to the top of the hill. The way was not pleasant, but the glorious view amply repaid me. On the land side Joppa is girt about with its orchards—the finest in Palestine, and,

perhaps, unsurpassed in the world. Away beyond them spreads out a boundless plain; on the north *Sharon*, and on the south Philistia. My eye soon caught and followed the line of the old road which winds northward along the coast to Cæsarea. That was the road by which the apostle Peter went on his divine mission to Cornelius, (Acts x.) Lydda was hid behind a rising ground; but the mountains of Judah were sharply defined against the bright eastern sky, and their colouring was beautiful—shaded off from soft greyish blue to deep purple.

To procure horses and a guide was a work of time and trouble, and the afternoon was far advanced ere I rode out of the crowded gate of Joppa. How pleasant was the change from the heat and dust of the narrow streets to the freedom and freshness of the country! It was autumn; and never did autumn's richness appear to greater advantage than in these orchards of Sharon. Orange, lemon, and citron trees were there laden with golden fruit. Among them appeared the russet foliage and bright red globes of the pomegranate. Here and there the broad-leafed banana grew in wild luxuriance, shut in by tall hedges and impenetrable thickets of cactus; while ever and anon palm trees shot up far overhead, as if to show the great clusters of dates that hung round their tapering necks, or to entice the soft evening breezes to sport with their feathery foliage.

I took the road to Lydda—the same road by which Peter was brought to raise Dorcas from the dead, after he had, by his miraculous cure of Eneas, converted "all that dwelt in Lydda and *Saron*," (the Greek form of *Sharon*, Acts ix. 34, seq.) For more than an hour I rode through those shady, fragrant orchards, and then crossed the grey monotonous plain to Lydda. Thence I went to the ancient Gimzo (2 Chron. xxviii. 18), now a poor village, and onward to the pass of Beth-horon, up which I wound my way to Gibeon and Jerusalem. The southern end of Sharon, which I thus crossed, measures about fifteen miles; while

the length of the plain from Joppa to Carmel is nearly fifty. In addition to Joppa and Lydda, there are ten or twelve villages in this part of the plain, and small portions of the rich soil are cultivated by their inhabitants; but further north the country is almost deserted.

NORTHERN SHARON.

We halted at the western gate of Samaria, waiting for one or two stragglers, and to take a last look at the place. The gate is a shapeless heap of ruins, forming the termination of the well-known colonnade. I was never more deeply impressed with the minute accuracy of prophetic description, and the literal fulfilment of every detail, than when standing on that spot. Samaria occupied one of the finest sites in Palestine,—a low, rounded hill, in the centre of a rich valley, encirclèd by picturesque mountains. Temples and palaces once adorned it, famed throughout the East for the splendour of their architecture. But the destroyer has passed over it. I saw that long line of broken shafts with the vines growing luxuriantly round their bases—I saw a group of columns in a corn-field on the hill-top—I saw hewn and sculptured blocks of marble and limestone in the rude walls of the terraced vineyards—I saw great heaps of stones and rubbish among the olive groves in the bottom of the valley far below—but I saw no other trace of the city founded by Omri and adorned by Herod. One would think the prophet Micah had seen that desolate site as I saw it, his description is so graphic:—"I will make Samaria as an heap of the field, *and as plantings of a vineyard; and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof*" (Micah i. 6).

Our road—a mere goat-track—led down the hill side through fields of ripe grain, in which the reapers were at work, though it was still early in May. We soon entered Wady Shaîr, a prolongation of the fertile and beautiful valley which separates Ebal and Gerizim, and at the head of

which stands Nâbulus, the modern representative of Shechem. Down it wound our long cavalcade, through cornfields and olive groves, and past threshing-floors already heaped up with the fruits of the early harvest. I observed with interest how masters and servants were there grouped together—the *sheikh* in his scarlet mantle, and the stalwart *fellâh* in his coat of many colours. Women and children too were there, and cooking utensils, and beds, showing that the harvest scenes of modern days among the villages of Palestine are just the same as those we read of in the Book of Ruth.

After a three hours' march we defiled from the valley into the plain of Sharon. Up among the mountains where the valley was narrow, and the declivities steep and rugged, nearly every available spot was cultivated, and populous villages appeared on each side. Here, on looking over the broad fertile plain, not a human habitation was visible, and only a few patches of the soil near the base of the mountains were under culture. Vineyards and olive groves have disappeared. Traces of the Roman road which once connected the great cities of Cæsarea and Sebaste are there, but it is overgrown with thistles and rank grass; and in a ride of four hours we did not see a solitary traveller,—so true is it that "the highways lie waste, and the wayfaring man ceaseth."

We turned north-west along the base of the mountains. On our right, perched on hill top or standing on rocky slope, were a few small half-ruinous villages; while, on our left, out upon the plain, we saw at long intervals little circlets of black tents. This is border land, between plain and mountain, between tent and house, between industrious villagers and wandering vagabonds, whose hands, like those of their forefathers, are "against every man."

We found our tents pitched at Bâkah, a populous village on the side of the plain. Its inhabitants are rich, well armed, and powerful. They wage an unceasing warfare

with the Bedawîn who infest Sharon, and by their courage, watchfulness, and rifles, they manage to keep them at a respectful distance. We were no little amused to find that the escort we had brought from the Governor of Nâbulus would not advance an inch beyond Bâkah. So far the road was perfectly safe, and so far the soldiers guarded us; but the plain westward swarmed with Bedawîn, among whom the soldiers would not venture, and consequently, pocketing their *bakhshîsh*, they returned in peace to their commander.

From Bâkah I found it impossible to obtain either guide or escort to Cæsarea. There is a standing blood-feud between its people and the Hawâra Arabs, who roam over the intervening plain. But I arranged with the village sheikh to conduct our party to a neutral tribe, with whom he assured us an arrangement could be effected. He did not fail to advise us, however, to turn back into the mountains, and proceed northward by a less dangerous route. This did not suit my plans; but as some ladies had joined my party, I thought it necessary to inform them and their companions of the true state of matters, and to show them how they might escape all danger by taking another route. In reply, they asked me if I intended to go to Cæsarea. "Most assuredly," I said. "Then we shall go too."

Our party mustered at sun-rise, and set out at once, led by two sheikhs splendidly mounted, and armed with tufted lances, carabines, and pistols. The caravan had a formidable look. Every rifle was unslung. The muleteers and servants, with their guns on their shoulders, kept close together in the centre, while a few active villagers brought up the rear. We numbered about forty animals, and as many men. Recent disturbances among the Arab tribes made the road unusually dangerous; and as our friends of Bâkah had, only two days previously, killed three of a plundering party of Sukrs, they were now apprehensive of an attack in greater force. For the first half hour we traversed the cultivated

fields of Bâkah, and then entered a wild rugged district. Low rocky spurs project from the mountains into the plain, sprinkled with oak trees, and covered with dense jungles of thorns and thistles—such thistles as are only seen in Palestine, often as tall as a man on horseback. We had gone but a short distance when one of our leaders raised a cry of alarm. I galloped to the front, and saw a number of Bedawîn lurking among the trees. Fortunately the path was tolerably wide. We drew up the horsemen on each side, placed the ladies and baggage animals in the centre, and then marched in military order. It was an anxious moment. We knew not at what point the enemy might assail us, or in what force they might come. For about an hour we advanced through the tangled thicket cautiously and silently. Then, with feelings of relief, we defiled into the open plain, and rode over it half a mile to a large fountain.

The scene round this fountain was thoroughly oriental. A tribe of semi-nomads were assembled on their threshing-floors, all busily engaged in the various details of "treading out the corn," winnowing, and carrying off the grain to subterranean magazines. Every man had his gun within reach. Some were driving the oxen with muskets slung on their shoulders and pistols in their belts. Women were there too—bold, stalwart women, whose look and mien reminded one of Deborah and Jael—armed with heavy clubs, partly intended to help their husbands in case of attack, and partly to toss up the grain and straw on the "floors." A number of horsemen, acting as patrols, scoured the neighbouring heights to give timely notice of an enemy. The moment we emerged from the oak forests the patrols galloped in, and the men and women prepared, with a skill and quickness that would have done credit to regular troops, for defending their position.

Our Bâkah escort could conduct us no farther. The out-posts of the Hawâra and Sukr were not far distant.

We were consequently delivered over to this neutral tribe. After much difficulty and long negotiation, we succeeded in persuading two footmen to guide us to Cæsarea. We had to abandon all idea of an escort, for we were plainly told that we must defend ourselves in case of attack, and that the guides would not interfere in any quarrel. Before parting, the guides very deliberately proceeded to divest themselves of every decent bit of clothing they possessed; even guns, and pistols, and daggers were laid aside. Retaining each a tattered shirt, and a bit of rag for a turban, they took a couple of clubs from the women, and led us on.

We set out due west, through corn-fields recently reaped. In a quarter of an hour all cultivation ceased. The plain extended away before us, not flat, but in graceful undulations, covered with rank grass, and weeds, and tall thistles. Clumps of trees were studded here and there over it. Away on the left, about two miles distant, was the long dark line of an oak forest shutting in the view, while about an equal distance on the right were the roots of Carmel shooting down into the plain in picturesque wooded promontories. The whole landscape reminded me of some of the noble parks of Old England. The only living creatures in sight for miles were some flocks of gazelles.

There was no path, and no impediment, and so we rode straight forward to the white sand hills faintly visible on the horizon. We had got about half-way, when, on topping a rising ground, we found before us a depression or valley, all cultivated. Here a number of men were at work;—some gathering in the newly-reaped grain, some on the threshing-floors with yokes of oxen, some tending herds of cattle, and a goodly number on horseback scouring the surrounding country. Our sudden appearance created a great commotion. The size of our party, the glittering of our arms, and our warlike aspect, made them believe that a Bedawy *Ghuzu* was upon them. The workmen fled, the

shepherds drove in the cattle, the horsemen galloped round, urging them on with their spears; and in a very few minutes they were all concentrated on a little knoll, prepared for defence. We passed half a mile to the south of the gathering-place; but here we unwittingly cut off a small party of some seven or eight men, engaged with their harvest in a retired glen. On seeing us they fled, leaving donkeys, and oxen, and even clothes, as they believed, at the mercy of the spoilers. Riding onwards at a sharp pace, we entered a valley, where we halted for a few minutes to examine an old building, apparently a fortified caravanserai. While scattered about the ruins, we were startled by a wild shout, and, looking up, we saw a party of Hawâra dashing down upon us at full gallop. A word was given, and in a moment we drew together, formed a line in front of the ladies, and prepared to give the Arabs a warm reception should they venture on an attack. Our bold front, and the sight of a formidable file of English rifles, cooled their ardour. They reined up, and looked steadily at us, as if trying to note a single sign of wavering or fear. While standing there they formed as wild and picturesque a group as ever peaceful pilgrims encountered, or wandering artist sketched. Their lances poised high overhead, the bright steel points glittering in the midst of black tufts of feathers—their arms and legs bare—their hair streaming in long plaited locks over breast and shoulders—their faces bronzed, and their eyes flashing with excitement—and their noble horses, with curved neck and expanded nostril, more eager for the fray even than their riders. We could not but admire those wild children of the desert, worthy representatives of their progenitor Ishmael.

While the balance hung between peace and war, the ladies, with a coolness and a "pluck" that would have done honour to veteran campaigners, were quietly passing remarks on the proud bearing and strange costume of the Bedawîn; and one of them—a daughter of the most dis-

tinguished prelate that ever adorned the Irish Church—took out her book and pencil to sketch the scene. I shall never forget the astonished look of the Hawâra chief, as he exclaimed, on seeing this act, "By the life of the Prophet! the Englishwoman is writing us down!"

The courage of the ladies produced apparently as powerful an effect as the sight of our rifles and revolvers. But be this as it may, the Hawâra thought discretion the better part of valour. Shouting a friendly *Salamu aleikum*—"Peace be with you!"—they wheeled round their horses and galloped off. We watched their movements, fearing that they might return in greater force. But we saw them strike off northward, until, coming upon a couple of poor fishermen on the banks of the Crocodile River, they seized them, and left them, in point of costume, precisely as the thieves left the man who "went down from Jerusalem to Jericho."

Such is modern life on the plain of Sharon. "No flesh has peace" there. Those who venture to till the soil must guard the fruit of their labours with the sword, and even risk life to save property. "Sharon is a wilderness," and through that wilderness the "spoilers now come upon all high places" (Jer. xii. 12).

CÆSAREA.

We were just two hours and a half in crossing the plain, and it was not yet noon when we entered the southern or Joppa gate of Cæsarea. Cæsarea was the capital of Palestine in the days of the apostles; it was the favourite residence of that Herod who "killed James the brother of John with the sword;" and it was the scene of the tyrant's awful death, recorded in Acts xii. 21–23. The city was closely connected with the early history of the Apostolic Church. Philip, after baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch, passed through Philistia and Sharon, "preaching in all the cities, till he came to Cæsarea" (Acts viii. 26–40). Pe-

ter here first preached the gospel to Gentiles, and here he baptized Cornelius, the first Gentile convert (x. 47). It was to Cæsarea Paul was brought a prisoner from Jerusalem. It was in the palace in this city he so spake of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," that he made Felix tremble. It was here the power of his logic forced King Agrippa to exclaim, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." And it was from this harbour he embarked on his long and eventful voyage to Rome (Acts xxiii. 33; xxiv. 25; xxvi. 28; xxvii. 1, 2). Here Eusebius, the father of ecclesiastical history, spent nearly his whole life, having been bishop of the diocese for a quarter of a century (A.D. 315–340). Here, too, Procopius was born in the beginning of the sixth century. The city was thus the home of two of the greatest historians of antiquity.

In passing through the gate of Cæsarea, I felt that I was indeed entering a "holy and historic place;" and I envy not the Christian or the scholar who could tread that site and look on those ruins without experiencing such a sense of mingled awe and reverence, and inspiring sympathy, as is ever awakened in the mind by the immediate presence of the great and the good. In only a very few other cities of Palestine was I so deeply impressed, so strangely and powerfully excited, by the *religio loci.* The profound silence, the utter desolation, the total absence of every sign of human life, left me alone, as it were, with the sacred associations and stirring memories of the past. The gate by which Peter entered was there; the ruins of the palace in which Paul preached were there; the remains of the harbor in which he embarked were there; the massive fragments of Eusebius' church were there; the walls which the brave Crusaders built were there. Every great event in the sacred and civil history of the city was localized, and fancy grouped again the old actors of the old scenes.

The ruins of Cæsarea lie close along the winding shore, projecting here and there into the sea, and presenting huge

masses of shattered masonry and piles of granite columns to the restless waves. In the interior all is ruin. Not a building remains entire. Not even the foundations of a building can be fully traced. Heaps of stones and rubbish, here a solitary column, there a disjointed arch, yonder a fragment of a wall—all encompassed or overgrown with thorns, and briars, and thistles, intermixed in spring with myriads of yellow marigolds and scarlet poppies. The famous harbour is choked up with sand and rubbish; and the great mole now forms that picturesque group of broken, sea-beaten masonry, which projects far into the sea, and constitutes the most striking feature in the well-known sketches of Bartlett, Tipping, and others. I wandered for hours among the ruins of Cæsarea. The sighing of the wind among the broken walls, the deep moan of the sea as each wave broke upon the cavernous ruins of the ancient harbour, were the only sounds I heard. I saw no man. The Arab and the shepherd avoid the spot. The very birds and beasts seem to shun it. The only living creature I saw during my stay was a jackal in one of the crypts of the cathedral.

Eight miles north of Cæsarea is Tantûra, a small village, built on an open sandy beach. Near it are the ruins of the ancient city of *Dor*, whose ruler was an ally of Jabin, King of Hazor, and one of the opponents of Joshua (Josh. xi. 1, 2). We encamped for the night on the site, and next morning rode northward along the shore to Carmel. The only place we passed worthy of note was the massive and picturesque fortress of Athlit, built on a rock which juts out into the sea. The Crusaders called it *Castellum Peregrinorum*, "Pilgrim's Castle," because it was a favourite landing-place for pilgrims on their way to the Holy City. Near it I observed an old road hewn through a cliff; and in its rocky floor the chariots have worn deep ruts, which reminded me of those in the streets of Pompeii.

CARMEL.

The good monks of the Convent of Carmel gave us a cordial welcome; and their neat rooms and clean beds formed real luxuries, which those only can fully appreciate who have spent weeks in camp-life. One of the sweetest retreats, one of the most charming resting-places for the pilgrim in Palestine, is the Convent of Mount Carmel. Here is a house that would not disgrace royalty; here are men whose intelligence and genial *bonhomie* even a cowl cannot cover; here is air cool and bracing during the hottest summer day; and here is a noble site, looking away out over the deep blue sea, commanding the classic shores of Phœnicia, and showing the snow-crowned peaks of Lebanon and Hermon over the "excellency of Carmel."

Carmel has many attractions for the naturalist, the antiquarian, and the classical scholar, as well as for the student of the Bible. Its ridge, descending on one side into the rich plain of Acre, and on the other, to the green vale of Dor or Sharon, contains some of the most pleasing, park-like scenery in Palestine. The wood that clothes it is chiefly prickly oak, a beautiful evergreen; so that while the "*excellency* of Carmel" (Isa. xxxv. 2) might well be regarded as a type of natural beauty, the "withering" of its foliage (Amos i. 2; Isa. xxxiii. 9) ought to be considered as an emblem of national desolation. The forest glades of Carmel are spangled with flowers of every hue. The thickets abound in game, and are also infested with wolves, hyenas, and leopards.

The sides of the mountain near the convent are filled with caves and grottoes, which formed the abodes of hermits in ancient days. The largest of these is called the "Cave of the Prophets," because Elijah is said to have received the chiefs of the people there. It is a plain, rock-hewn chamber, with Greek names and inscriptions on the walls. In the fields below it great numbers of stones may be seen,

which resemble melons and olives. The former are flints, with beautiful sparry matter inside; and the latter are good specimens of the fossil *echinus*.

SCENE OF ELIJAH'S SACRIFICE.

Carmel is chiefly celebrated as the scene of Elijah's sacrifice. The exact spot is marked by local tradition, by the agreement of its physical features with the Scripture narrative, and by its name, *el-Muhrakah*, "The Sacrifice." It is about six hours ride from the convent, over the crest of the ridge. I visited it from the Plain of Esdraelon, on the opposite or eastern side. It is on the brow of the mountain, and commands the whole plain to Jezreel and Tabor. Close to the base of the range, below the spot, flows the river Kishon, where the prophets of Baal were slain; and just above the spot is a projecting peak, from which Elijah's servant saw the "little cloud, like a man's hand, rising out of the sea," (1 Kings xviii.)

Another episode of Bible history I read with new interest in this place. Elisha was here when the Shunamite's son died. Looking down one afternoon from his commanding position, he saw her "afar off" on the plain. He sent his servant to meet her; but she pressed up the mountain side "to the man of God." Dismounting hastily, she threw herself on the ground before him, "and caught him by the feet"—just as an Arab woman would still do under similar circumstances. Elisha, on hearing her tale of sorrow, sent away Gehazi with his staff to raise the dead child; but she, with all a mother's earnestness, exclaimed, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And he rose and followed her," (2 Kings iv.)

Carmel was the favourite retreat of both Elijah and Elisha. In the stirring times in which they lived, it was a fitting place for the prosecution of the great work of reform for which they laboured and prayed. It was central in position, and easy of access from all parts of Palestine.

It afforded in its deep dells and dense thickets sufficient privacy for such as wished to pay secret visits to the men of God; and it offered a secure asylum to all compelled to flee from the persecutions of the idolatrous Ahab, and the cruelties of the infamous Jezebel. The situation of el-Muhrakah also struck me as peculiarly suitable for the headquarters of the prophets. It could only be reached by a long and steep ascent. No man could approach it unseen; and any hostile party would be visible at a great distance. Beside it is a well with an unfailing spring, and upon it are the remains of a massive ancient building.

Sitting on that commanding height, on a bright spring evening, I felt persuaded I was upon the scene of Elijah's great sacrifice. Beside and under me were probably the very stones of which God's altar was built, and over which played the heavenly flame. A few paces beneath me was the well from which the water was drawn, that the prophet's servants poured upon the altar. Around me were the thickets from which the wood was cut. Away at the foot of the mountain flowed the Kishon in its deep bed, which on that day ran red with the blood of Jehovah's enemies. There, stretching out before me, was the plain across which Ahab dashed in his chariot; and yonder, on its eastern border, I saw the little villages which mark the sites and still bear the names of Jezreel and Shunem. Is it strange that when one thus visits the "*holy and historic places of Palestine*," the grand events of Bible history should appear to be enacted over again, and should become to him living realities?

> "Land of fair Palestine, where Jesus trod,
> Thy ruins and thy relics tell of God:
> Thine everlasting hills with awe proclaim
> The holy records of Jehovah's name:
> Thy fallen cities crumbled into dust,
> Pronounce the judgment of Jehovah just."



II.

Mount Tabor and the Valley of Jezreel.

"Surely as Tabor is among the mountains, and as Carmel by the sea, so shall he come."
—JER. xlvi. 18.

TABOR is the traditional "Mount of Transfiguration." Were it the real scene of that wondrous event, it would yield in interest to none of Palestine's "Holy Places." But the tradition is questionable, and sacred topography is opposed to it. Yet it can lay claim to a venerable antiquity, for Jerome, in the fourth century, when making his pilgrimage with the saintly Paula, says, "She ascended Tabor, on which the Lord was transfigured." Jerome's words and monkish superstition have canonized the mountain. Churches have been built upon it, pilgrimages have been made to it, and for fifteen centuries it has been honoured as one of the shrines of the Holy Land.

But independent of apocryphal tradition and monkish superstition, Tabor holds rank among Palestine's celebrated mountains. Gilead and Pisgah, Olivet and Carmel, Tabor and Hermon, are all honoured names in sacred story. In olden days of Canaanitish Baal-worship Tabor was a "high place;" and the northern tribes appear, in this case as in many others, to have forgotten the divine command, "Ye shall utterly destroy all the places wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, *upon the high mountains*, and upon the hills" (Deut. xii. 2; compare 2 Kings xvii. 9-12). They appear to have erected

altars and images upon Tabor; and hence the force and pointedness of Hosea's accusation,—"Hear ye this, O priests; and hearken, ye house of Israel; and give ye ear, O house of the king; for judgment is toward you, because ye have been a snare on Mizpeh, *and a net spread upon Tabor*" (v. 1). The people were there deceived and ensnared by the idolatrous practices of their leaders.

And Tabor was the gathering-place of the northern tribes in time of danger or war. For this, as I shall show, both its position and its natural features admirably fitted it. Here Deborah ordered Barak to concentrate his army to oppose Sisera: "Go and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun" (Judges iv. 6). Here, too, some of Israel's warriors had been attacked and slain by the host of Midian, before Gideon's victory. Gideon asked Zebah and Zalmunna, "What manner of men were they whom ye slew at Tabor? And they answered, As thou art, so were they: each one resembled a king" (Judges viii. 18). Even before the conquest, it would seem that the great Lawgiver's prophetic eye had been fixed upon Tabor, when he said of Zebulun and Issachar, "They shall call the people unto *the mountain;* there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness" (Deut. xxxiii. 19).

ASCENT OF TABOR.

It was on the 8th of May, at noon, in a flood of glorious sunshine, I first approached the northern base of Tabor. At intervals, during the two preceding days, I had seen it from the heights of Naphtali and the banks of the upper Jordan. Now that it was before me, I was disappointed. There is nothing of majesty in its elevation, nor of grandeur in its scenery, that would at all make it rival Hermon or Lebanon. Its shape and partial isolation are striking, but nothing more. The point from which I got the most pleasing view was beside the ruins of Khan et-Tujjâr, two

miles to the north. The intervening ground was table-land, with a gently undulating surface, and belts of plantation, and clumps of trees, and vistas of green turf bordered with shrubbery, like an English park. Over it, to the height of twelve hundred feet or more, rose Tabor; in shape a segment of a sphere; its sides and regularly curved top all sprinkled with evergreen oaks and terebinths. It is undoubtedly the most conspicuous hill in Central Palestine—not from its altitude, for there are others much higher, but from its isolated position, unique shape, and unfading verdure. When first seen from the north, as I saw it, its curved outline breaks the dull monotony of the hills of Galilee. When first seen from the south, it is still more imposing. Then it swells up like a vast dome from the plain of Esdraelon; and in the richness of its foliage, and delicate green of its forest glades, it presents a pleasing contrast to the brown rocky summits of Ephraim, and the bare white crowns of Judah.

My path led through a widespread camp of Nomads, "children of the east," who had come here in early spring, like the Midianites of old, to devour the luxuriant pastures of Palestine. They were a wild and a lawless race, and I felt that to pass them in safety would require some little tact. I rode boldly to the nearest tent, and asked for water. A large bowl of milk was handed to me by an Arab girl; bread, too, was offered, of which I ate a small quantity. I was now their guest, under their protection, freed from all danger of attack on person or property. I demanded a guide or rather an escort, for the way was plain enough, to the foot of Tabor. The girl conducted me to the tent of the sheikh, which was pitched under the shade of a noble oak. He was not at home; but his son, a fine-looking boy of fifteen, leaped on the back of a beautiful mare that stood ready saddled, and, seizing the spear which was stuck in the ground at the tent door, told me to follow him.

My little guide led me to the western base of Tabor, within sight of the village of Deburieh, which nestles in a quiet nook on the side of the great plain. There he wheeled round, waved a polite adieu, and was out of sight in a moment. I turned my horse's head up the zig-zag path that leads to the top of the hill; but soon, wearying of the windings, I left my horse in charge of my servant, and clambered up straight to the summit. It was a rash act. On my way I saw several jackals, and heard sundry barks and growls in the jungles as they scampered off, which made me feel somewhat uncomfortable. The summit is broad, strewn with ruins, and covered with thickets of dwarf oak and prickly shrubs. I entered a narrow opening, and was proceeding along a beaten track, when I was startled by a loud snort; and a huge boar, with head down and mane erect, brushed past me, and was followed by a sow and a litter of young. I scarce knew what to do. The place was quite different from what I had expected. As yet I could see nothing but thickets of ilex and heaps of ruins. I was thirsty, and thirst compelled me to run the risk of more encounters with the denizens of the jungle. After some time and trouble, I discovered water at the bottom of a large dark vault or cistern. A rude staircase once led down the side, but it was now in a great measure destroyed. I was resolved, however, to reach in some way the tempting fluid. Holding by an overhanging branch, I began the descent, when suddenly a panther bounded out from an obscure corner, and turning round, growled at me from the opposite side. I could do nothing except look steadily at the beautiful but dangerous creature. Gradually it shrunk back, and at length disappeared in a thicket. I was a good deal relieved when I heard the voice of my servant, and still more so when he came up and handed me my gun.

In all that painful, fearful desolation on the top of Tabor, the finger of God was visible. Prophecy was fulfilled before my eyes. Every object I saw was an emblem and a

result of the curse—ruins, thorns and thistles, wild beasts, a deserted stronghold. What a commentary upon the words of the ancient prophets! "I will destroy your high places. . . . . . I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries into desolation. . . . . *Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briars, yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city;* because the palaces shall be forsaken; the multitude of the city shall be left; *the forts and towers shall be for dens*" (Lev. xxvi. 30, 31; Isa. xxxii. 13, 14).

THE RUINS.

The ruins on the summit of Tabor are extensive. The destroyer, however, has dealt so heavily with them, and they are so overgrown with thorns, and briars, and thistles, that any minute examination by a passing traveller is impossible. I spent the whole afternoon exploring, and since that time I spent an entire day among them, yet I was not satisfied.

The top of the mount is a level, oval-shaped area, about a mile in circuit. Round it are the remains of a massive wall, outside which is a moat hewn in the rock. The foundations of the wall are colossal, and of the earliest type of Jewish masonry. Some of the towers are much more recent; and one gateway, still standing, has a pointed Saracenic arch, and an Arabic inscription stating that the fortress was built, or more probably *rebuilt*, by Abubekr, brother of the renowned Saladin, in the year A.D. 1210. Near the south-eastern angle I saw a little vault in which the Latin monks from Nazareth celebrate an annual mass, in honour of the *Transfiguration*. On the opposite side the Greeks have their altar and sanctuary, and are in the habit, I was informed, of making a yearly pilgrimage to the spot and spending a day on the summit. But during my visits to Tabor, the mountain was deserted. Not a human being was there; and not a vestige of anything like a permanent

abode of man. I saw dead ashes and charred sticks, left there apparently by some passing traveller like myself. I was not even so fortunate as to meet the hermit of whom Dean Stanley tells such a romantic story; but if the panther I saw was that which is said to have been the constant companion of the old man, I fear his attempts to tame it had not been very successful.

The top of Tabor was evidently the site of a city as well as of a sanctuary from a very early period. In fact its strong and commanding position could not fail to attract the notice of the warlike Canaanites. The city was allotted to Issachar (Josh. xix. 22); and it continued a place of note, not only throughout the whole period of Jewish history, but down to the close of the Crusades.

The view from Tabor possesses a far higher interest for the Bible student and the Christian pilgrim than its hoary and desolate ruins. It is one of those wondrous panoramas which time can never obliterate from the memory; and whose striking features and vivid colouring, change can never dim. The notes I wrote on the mount are before me, but they are scarcely needed. I see the landscape now as I saw it then. On the north, Naphtali's brown peaks running in a serried ridge athwart the glowing sky. Further to the right a little corner of the Sea of Galilee, slumbering in its deep, deep bed, and the glittering top of Hermon towering over it like a guardian angel. On the east the long purple ridge of Gilead, rising like a colossal wall from the Jordan valley. On the south the plain of Esdraelon, Palestine's battle-field, sweeping round the base of the mount, and extending, a sea of verdure, away to the hills of Samaria, and the dark ridge of Carmel. In the distance, ranged along its opposite side, I saw dimly the isolated tells on which once stood the cities of Taanach, Megiddo, and Jokneam of Carmel. Directly facing me, four miles distant, beyond an eastern arm of the plain, rose "the hill Moreh," a grey, treeless ridge, with the villages of Endor

and Nain upon its side. Over its left shoulder appeared the bare white top of Gilboa. Westward my eye wandered along the wooded heights of Galilee to the Great Sea, a section of which was visible beside the bold promontory of Carmel.

Standing on this spot I was able to understand why Tabor was the gathering-place of the northern tribes. Connected by a wooded ridge with the hills of Galilee and mountains of Naphtali, it was always accessible to them; while at the same time it stood out commanding the plain of Esdraelon. Its steep sides were easily defended, and its broad top gave ample space for the organization of a little army of mountaineers. The plain below it was the centre of attraction for all invaders. Its pastures tempted the nomads of Arabia; its firm flat surface attracted the chariots and horsemen of Philistia, Canaan, and Syria. From the top of Tabor the light infantry of Israel could watch all their movements, and take advantage of any fitting opportunity for attack. The graphic story of Barak and Deborah was here brought vividly before my mind;—Barak eagerly watching the advance of Sisera across the plain; while Deborah, with the enthusiasm of a patriot, and the inspiration of a propheless, looked and prayed to heaven for the signal to attack. At length her eye saw it, and she cried: "Up, for this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not the Lord gone out before thee?" (Judges iv. 14).

The sun went down, and deep purple shadows fell upon plain and valley. The wild plaintive wail of jackals, mingled with the sharper howl of wolves, warned me to seek safer quarters. I mounted and rode slowly down to Debûrieh. Here stood the Canaanitish *Daborath*, but it has long since disappeared, and the only remains of antiquity now are the walls of a mediæval church.

THE VALLEY OF JEZREEL.

"*I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel*" (Hos. i. 5).—The old city of Jezreel gave its name to one of the noblest plains of Palestine, and that name was afterwards softened by the Greeks into the more familiar Esdraelon. Its position affords a key to its bloody history. It intersects Central Palestine, extending from the bay of Acre to the fords of the Jordan. It was thus open to all invaders—to the Philistines from the coast, the Israelites from the east, and the Syrians from the north; while at a later period it was the highway along which passed and repassed the armies of Assyria and Egypt. Its wide-spread meadows and corn-fields, its luxuriant pastures and abundant waters courted rest, and gave ample space for military manœuvres. The northern tribes watched the invaders from the top of Tabor, and the southern tribes had their gathering-place on the heights of Gilboa, or at the passes of Megiddo, according as the enemy came from the east or west.

Issachar, to whom this plain was allotted, suffered more than all the other tribes. His was a hard lot. In the condition and history of the plain—open to every incursion, exposed to every shock of war—we see the fortunes of the tribe, and we have a melancholy commentary on the blessing of Jacob: "Issachar is a strong ass, couching down between two burdens; and he saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute" (Gen. xlix. 14, 15). As the peasants do still who cultivate patches of Esdraelon, Issachar paid black-mail to the "children of the East." When the tribe saw the prowess of David, and his ability to protect Israel, their valuable possessions and exposed position made them anxious for his succession to the throne. And this explains the words of the sacred writer,—"Of the children of Issachar, *which were men that had*

understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do" (1 Chron. xii. 32).

The main part of Esdraelon is triangular in form. Its base on the east reaches from Engannim to Tabor, fifteen miles; and its apex is at the foot of Carmel, where the Kishon flows into the plain of Acre. From the base, however, three arms stretch out eastward, divided by two short parallel ridges. The northern arm lies between Tabor and the ridge of Moreh, and the central between the latter and Gilboa. These two extend down to the Jordan. The third arm is on the south side of Gilboa, and is shut in on the east by the mountains of Ephraim.

ENDOR.

In the ruddy morning twilight I rode across the beautiful plain to Endor. It is a poor village of some twenty houses, perched on the bleak side of Moreh, about two hundred yards above the plain. The rocks round it are pierced with caves—some natural, some artificial, as if the old inhabitants had been troglodytes. Above the village is one larger than the rest, the entrance to which is between high rocks, and is partly covered by the branches of a fig-tree. Within it is a fountain called *'Ain Dor*, "the fountain of Dor," which doubtless gave its name to the ancient as well as the modern village. Entering this gloomy grotto, and looking round on its dark riven sides, I felt how suitable such a spot would be for the interview between Saul and the witch.

NAIN.

A pleasant ride of forty minutes along the hill-side brought me to Nain. It was by the very same path our Lord approached it, for he was on his way from Capernaum. It was with no little interest, therefore, I observed on my left, three or four hundred yards from the village, a group of rock tombs. Towards one of these probably the funeral

procession was moving when He met and stopped it. How vividly did the whole scene appear to me now as I stood on the spot! The procession issuing from the gate; the men carrying the open bier; the women behind grouped round the poor widow, and rending the air with their cries, as they do still. Another procession meets them. He who heads it looks with melting tenderness on the widow, and says, in accents that thrill her soul, "Weep not." He touches the bier. In mingled awe and astonishment the bearers stop. "*Young man, I say unto thee, Arise!*" As the words are uttered the dead rises to life; and in a moment he is in the arms of his mother.

Nain is a small village; but the ruins round it show that it was much larger in olden times; and it commands one of the finest views in Central Palestine. Beneath it the plain, beyond which rise the wooded hills of Galilee; and on the north the great flat dome of Tabor, with Hermon shooting up behind it on the distant horizon. From this place I first saw these two mountains in close perspective proximity, and I thought that perhaps it might have been some such view which suggested the Psalmist's words: "*The north and the south thou hast created them; Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name*" (lxxxix. 12).

SHUNEM.

The path from Nain to Shunem passes round the western slopes of Moreh. As I turned my back on Tabor the brown hills of Samaria came in sight, looking like a lower continuation of Carmel; then Gilboa came into view, rising up white and bare from the centre of the beautiful green plain, and having the grey ruins of Jezreel at its western base. Sweeping round still to the left, I looked away down the middle arm of Esdraelon to the lofty tell on which the old city of Beth-shan stood, and beyond it to the picturesque range of Gilead. This is "the valley of Jezreel"

properly so called, and the scene of some of the most momentous events in Jewish history.

Shunem was now below me, situated in a little nook at the foot of the ridge, encircled by enclosed gardens and luxuriant fields of corn. I rode into it and dismounted at the fountain. The people were rude and almost hostile; but there was an air of sturdy independence about them, and of thrift and success about their houses and fields, that pleased me. A party of men and women were busy reaping in an adjoining barley field; and a number of little children were basking in the bright sunshine among the sheaves and stubble, all with bare heads, and a few of them stark naked. I sat down and read the story of the Shunemite, every detail of which assumed a life-like vividness. In the house of a great man—probably the sheikh—of that village Elisha was wont to lodge. One day his son—the child of promise—"went out to his father to the reapers," just as the children I saw now had gone out. But the heat was too much for him. The fatal *sun stroke* prostrated him. "My head, my head," he cried; and when carried home to his mother, "he sat on her knees till noon, and died" (2 Kings iv. 8–20). The mother's journey across that plain to Carmel, and Elisha's miracle, are well known.

GIDEON'S VICTORY.

The scene of one of the most glorious victories, and of one of the most disastrous defeats in the annals of Israel, was before me at Shunem. It was with no ordinary interest I proceeded to survey the battle-field, so as fully to understand the sacred narrative. When the "Midianites, and the children of the east," with their herds, numerous and destructive as locusts, invaded the land three thousand years ago, they pitched their tents on the north side of the valley of Jezreel, "by the hill of Moreh;" while Gideon and his little band of warriors "pitched beside the well of Harod," on the south side, at the foot of Gilboa (Judges vi.

3, 30; vii. 1). The hill Moreh was there, rising up close behind Shunem. The camp of the Midianites lay along its base, probably extending from the fountain of Shunem down to Beth-shan. Mounting my horse I rode across the rich valley to Gideon's camp at the well of Harod. The distance is a little over three miles, and there is a slight descent the whole way. The well, or rather "fountain," for the Hebrew word is *Ain*, springs from a wide excavation in the rocky root of Gilboa, and sends out a copious stream which forms a miniature lake, and then murmurs away down the vale. Gilboa rises over it in broken cliffs. Gideon's active followers had assembled upon the mountain; and he, at God's command, "brought them down to the water" to test them (vii. 4); this done they again ascended (ver. 8). During the night Gideon "went down" with his servant to spy out the camp of the enemy (verses 9, 10). He heard the Midianite tell his dream; he knew thus that the Lord's time of deliverance was come; and by his singular but effective stratagem, and unexpected assault, he struck terror into the host of the enemy, and they fled in wild disorder down the valley to the fords of the Jordan. For the first time I there saw how not only every detail of the battle was accurate, but how every incidental expression of the sacred historian was illustrated by the topography of the battle-field.

THE DEATH OF SAUL AND JONATHAN.

Two centuries later the Philistines marched into the centre of Israel, and took up their position at Shunem, on the spot where the Midianites had encamped. Saul then gathered the tribes on the heights of Gilboa (1 Sam. xxviii. 4). Looking down from his commanding position on the warlike array, and the formidable war-chariots of the enemy, drawn up in the valley, Saul "was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled." Conscience made a coward of him, for he felt that he had forgotten God, and that God had there-

fore forsaken him. The closing scene of Saul's life is sad and solemn. One's heart bleeds for the great man; and looking at him morally as well as physically, one is constrained to exclaim, "How are the mighty fallen!"

Forsaken by Heaven, he so far forgot himself as to seek counsel from the spirits of darkness. During the night he crossed the valley, passing along the east side of the Philistine army, and went over the shoulder of Moreh to Endor, where he visited the witch. The distance is about seven miles, so that he must have travelled at least fourteen that night. Though wearied with the journey, and broken in spirit, he drew up his troops in the morning at the fountain of Harod. The position was badly chosen. The ground slopes down from Shunem, and the Philistines had thus all the advantage for attack; while both front and flanks of the Israelites were exposed, and flight all but impossible, owing to the steepness of the mountain behind. The Israelites were broken by the first impetuous charge of the enemy, and the slaughter was dreadful as they attempted to flee up Gilboa: "They fell down slain in Mount Gilboa. And the Philistines followed hard upon Saul and upon his sons. . . . . And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was sore wounded of the archers" (1 Sam. xxxi. 1–3). David in his beautiful ode has brought out the peculiarity of the position: "*The beauty of Israel is slain upon the high places.* . . . . . How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain *in thine high places!*" (2 Sam. i. 19, 25.)

The stripping and mutilating of the slain, mentioned in the narrative, may seem to some inhuman, and almost incredible. Strange to say, it is characteristic of Arab warfare to this day. I myself saw a fearful example of it a few years ago, not many miles from this spot. During a journey through Palestine I witnessed a battle, or rather massacre of Kurds by Hawâra Arabs. I visited the battlefield the day after; and there I found the ground strewn

with corpses, *all stripped*, and some frightfully mutilated. Akeil Aga, and the ruffian horde that now follow him, are worthy representatives of the old Philistines. After that spectacle of human barbarity I read with more intense feelings of horror the closing scene of the battle of Gilboa: "And it came to pass on the morrow, *when the Philistines came to strip the slain*, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen in Mount Gilboa. *And they cut off his head*, and stripped off his armour . . . . . And they put his armour in the house of Ashtaroth; *and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan*" (1 Sam. xxxi. 8–10).

From the fountain of Harod I rode up an old path, hewn deeply in the rocky side of Gilboa. Looking upon that mountain—bleak, and white, and barren, without tree, or shrub, or blade of grass—I could scarcely help thinking that the wildly plaintive words of David's lamentation were prophetic: "Ye mountains of Gilboa, *let there be no dew, neither let there be rain upon you, nor fields of offerings;* for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil" (2 Sam. i. 21).

JEZREEL.

On approaching the little village which occupies the site of the ancient city of Jezreel, I rode through a modern cemetery, which lies open and neglected on the hill-side. There I saw a troop of dogs burrowing into a new-made grave, while two huge vultures were perched on a cliff not a hundred yards distant. The place seemed deserted; there was none "to fray them away." Did it not look like an illustration of the prophetic curse and the historic narrative given in the Bible?—"In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel" (2 Kings ix. 36; compare 1 Kings xxi. 23). That was not the only place in Palestine where I saw dogs and vultures holding a horrid carnival among the tombs.

There is not a vestige of royalty in Jezreel now. A dozen miserable houses clustered round a shattered tower are all that mark the site and bear the name of the capital of Ahab. With the exception of a large sarcophagus and some caves hewn in the soft limestone of the hill, there are no traces of antiquity. The city is utterly ruined. Its very ruins have disappeared. Its vineyards, too, are all gone, and the slopes immediately round the village are bare and barren as a desert. The blood shed, and the crimes committed there, would seem to have brought a double curse upon Jezreel. Looking on that scene of desolation, in the centre of one of the finest plains in the world, I thought of the murder of poor Naboth, and of Joram, and of the infamous Jezebel, and of the whole royal family, (1 Kings xxi.; 2 Kings ix., x.)

But the site is a noble one, worthy of a royal city. It is a little knoll at the western extremity of the Gilboa range. The green plain to which it gave a name sweeps nearly all round its base. Standing on the top of the knoll, I saw the whole panorama of Esdraelon, from the Jordan valley below Beth-shan away to the dark ridge of Carmel, and from the mountains of Samaria on the south to the wooded heights of Galilee on the north. I there read with new interest the graphic narrative of the ninth chapter of 2 Kings. It was from those eastern mountains, from Ramoth of Gilead, Jehu came. Up that vale the watchman on Jezreel's tower saw the horsemen and chariots dashing, and he called out, "The driving is like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi; for he driveth furiously." Joram went out to meet him in his chariot, and Ahaziah accompanied him in his chariot. They drove down the steep descent to the valley. There they met Jehu, and there Joram was slain, and his body thrown into the vineyard of Naboth. Ahaziah turned and fled southward along "the road to *Engannim*" (incorrectly translated in our version "by the way of the garden house," ver. 27). But he too was fatally

wounded, and they took him across the plain to Megiddo, and there he died.

BATTLE-FIELD OF MEGIDDO.

It was noon when I left Jezreel. The sun was blazing in the centre of a cloudless sky. The plain, usually so silent and desolate, was all astir with the flocks and herds of Bedawîn, who had crossed the Jordan two days previously, like locusts for multitude, and like locusts for destruction. I found one of the petty sheikhs at Jezreel, and engaged him to ride with me to Carmel, to prevent annoyance and perhaps danger; for his tribe were not of good repute. He was a fine specimen of the Ishmaelite,—wild, free, and generous. He was finely mounted too, and quite willing to show off by word and act the matchless perfections of his mare. He asked me of my country, especially of what he called the "fire-ships" and "fire-horses," of which somebody had given him an account, though he had evidently not believed a single word of it. After I had described as well as I could the construction, and power, and speed of steam-boat and locomotive, he came close up, and laying his hand on my arm, and looking with eagle glance straight into my face, he said, in a deep impetuous voice, "*Ya Beg! by the life of the prophet, are you laughing at my beard, or is it truth you tell?*" Of course I assured him I was stating simple facts. He shook his head and turned away, half perplexed, half disappointed. He rode on in advance for nearly ten minutes without saying a word; then turning he related with perfect gravity a story of his uncle, who had ridden on the back of a *Jann* from Bagdad to India and back again in a single night. There was a great deal of quiet irony in this. I didn't believe a word of his story, and he didn't believe a word of mine.

A sharp ride of an hour and quarter brought us to the village of *Taannuk*, the representative of the old city of *Taanach*. It stands near the northern base of the moun-

tains of Samaria. Beside it is an isolated tell covered with ruins.

We were now approaching the field on which Barak gained his famous victory,—"The kings came and fought; *then fought the kings of Canaan in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo*" (Judges v. 19). We rode on across the plain, through luxuriant corn-fields and verdant meadows, and in less than an hour were on the site of Megiddo. The old city has almost disappeared, and its name has long since been forgotten. It is now called Lejjûn, a corruption of the Roman *Legio*, which took the place of the Jewish Megiddo. The ruins of a large mediæval caravansery, two or three mills in a wady near it, some columns, and rubbish heaps, and building stones along the banks of a little stream,—such are the only vestiges of the royal city of the Canaanites. They lie in a quiet nook at the foot of the hills, on the border of Esdraelon. A short distance north is a large tell or hill, isolated; it was probably the site of a fortress or citadel. The stream flows past it, and falls into the Kishon two miles northward. Here are unquestionably "the waters of Megiddo," beside which the battle was fought.

Riding to the summit of the tell, the battle-field was before me. Taanach was visible, and the intervening plain was spread out like a map. The details of the battle were now intelligible. It would seem that Sisera had marshalled his army, with his "nine hundred chariots of iron," on the south bank of the Kishon, between Taanach and Megiddo, with the purpose probably of invading the territory of the southern tribes (Judges iv. 13). But news arrived that the northern tribes had assembled on Tabor. Sisera turned to meet them—he was drawn unto Barak as Deborah had predicted (ver. 7). Deborah gave the signal; Barak charged down the mountain side. Probably the repulse of the van took place between Tabor and Endor (Ps. lxxxiii. 10). At that critical moment, as Josephus

tells us, before the Canaanites had time to rally, a tremendous storm of rain, hail, and thunder from the east burst upon the battle-field, and full in the face of the foe. Horses, men, chariots, were driven back in fell confusion,—"*They fought from heaven, the stars in their courses fought against Sisera*" (Judges v. 20). The plain became a marsh; the Kishon rose rapidly; its alluvial banks were converted into a quagmire: "The river Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon" (ver. 21).

In the spring of 1858 I saw the low parts of Esdraelon, previously hard and dry, turned into a dangerous morass by a few hours' heavy rain; and the Kishon was swollen to such an extent as to render it altogether impassable at the ordinary fords.

Six centuries later another battle was fought on the plain of Megiddo. And then, instead of a song of triumph, a death-wail re-echoed through the mountains of Israel.

Pharaoh-necho, marching against Assyria, passed along the plains of Palestine. King Josiah rashly attempted to oppose his progress. The Egyptian monarch gave him a friendly warning: "What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war; for God commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not" (2 Chron. xxxv. 21). The warning was neglected. Josiah posted his troops at Megiddo, so as to attack the Egyptians when defiling through the pass from Sharon. But the archers of the enemy, perhaps from some hill-side or rock, gave Josiah a fatal wound, and that decided the battle. The king was carried away to Jerusalem to die; and the whole land mourned so bitterly for the good king that the mourning became a proverb, to which Zechariah thus alludes,—"In that day there shall be *a great mourning, as the mourning of Hadad-rimmon, in the valley of Megiddon*" (xii. 11).

It may be that this plain of Megiddo, this great battlefield of Israel and of Palestine, was before the mind of the apostle John in Patmos when he figuratively described the conflict between the powers of good and evil, who were gathered to a place "called in the Hebrew tongue *Ar-Mageddon*,"—that is, "the city of Megiddo" (Rev. xvi. 16).

From Megiddo I rode westward along the south bank of the Kishon, passing the desolate site of Jokneam, then along the base of Carmel to Haifa, then up the steep path to the convent, which I reached at length, weary and way-worn, after one of the longest and hardest rides I ever had in Syria.



III.

The Shrines of Naphtali and Cities of Phœnicia.

"Where is thy favoured haunt, eternal voice,
The region of thy choice,
Where, undisturbed by sin and earth, the soul
Owns thy entire control ?
'Tis on the mountain's summit dark and high,
When storms are hurrying by ;
'Tis mid the strong foundations of the earth,
Where torrents have their birth."

THE Naphtalites were the highlanders of Palestine. Their territory was a prolongation of "that goodly mountain, Lebanon," separated from the main chain by the narrow ravine of the Leontes. Their shrines and strongholds were high up amid mountain fastnesses; but their pastures stretched down to the banks of the Jordan, and their corn-fields lay along the sunny shores of the Sea of Galilee. Within their borders there was more variety of scenery and climate than in any of the other tribes. The plain of Gennesaret by the lake is *seven hundred feet below* the level of the ocean. Tropical heat and eternal summer reign there. The soil is of surpassing fertility, yielding the choicest fruits, and producing the rarest flowers. Even old Josephus, usually so dull and prosy, waxes eloquent under the inspiration of the richness and beauty of this noble plain. Then the green meadows along the sacred river, and the verdant slopes and downs above, rival in luxuriance the pastures of Bashan on the opposite bank.

And when we climb the wooded mountain sides that shut in the Jordan valley, we find ourselves on a wide expanse of table land, two thousand feet and more above the sea. The scenery is here charming—altogether different from the bleak hills and rugged glens of the south, where the vine and the olive are at home upon rocky terraces. Here are alluvial plains covered with waving corn; long undulating ridges, and graceful rounded hill-tops, clothed with the evergreen foliage of the oak and terebinth; while thickets of aromatic shrubs, and velvety lawns of verdant turf spangled with flowers, fill up the forest glades. Then there are glens—long, winding, densely wooded glens—with tiny streams murmuring among rocks, and playing with oleander flowers, away down in deep shady beds. The mountain-sides are all furrowed with these glens,—so retired, so musical, so fragrant, so wildly picturesque, that one is never weary wandering through them, or reclining in their sequestered dells. If nature could influence mind, if it could create genius, Naphtali would be a land of poets. There the mind receives by every avenue all that tends to delight, to ennoble, to inspire. The fresh mountain breezes are laden with perfumes—"the smell of Lebanon." The ear is filled with melody—the song of birds; the murmur of waters; the music of the forest as the tempest sweeps its wild chords, or the zephyr touches, as with seraph's finger, its softest notes. And the eye revels amid nature's choicest scenes,—the soft, park-like beauty of upland plain, the picturesque loveliness of winding vale and glen, and the grandeur of Hermon and Lebanon, whose snow-crowned peaks rise far overhead, now cradling the storm-clouds of winter, now distilling the dews of summer. Can it be that the heaven-inspired Jacob, looking into the distant future, saw Naphtali placed amid these ennobling landscapes, and indicated its effects in the prophetic blessing, "*He uttereth words of beauty?*" (Gen. xlix. 21.) And is it so that the war-song of Barak—one of the finest odes in the Bible—is

an example of these "words of beauty," and has been handed down to us as a specimen and proof of Naphtali's poetic genius?

Naphtali also teems with animal life. I was always deeply impressed with the solitude of southern Palestine. The words of Jeremiah constantly recurred to my mind as I rode across desolate plains and among desolate hills, "It is desolate, without man and without beast" (xxxii. 43). Men, beasts, and birds, seem alike to have deserted it. In Naphtali all is different. True, man is almost a stranger there also; but down by the Jordan the pastures are covered with droves of kine and buffalos; and the jungles are filled with wild swine; and the surface of lake and river is all astir with fowl. The mountain glens are infested with leopards, hyenas, and jackals; and troops of fleet gazelles scour the upland plains.

MOSES' BLESSING TO NAPHTALI.

The Jewish lawgiver saw in prophetic vision the country in store for Naphtali, and in poetic imagery sketched its leading features. Unfortunately our English version cloaks rather than reveals the graphic touches of the Hebrew. I shall try to bring out the true meaning. The blessing is an exclamation; as if, with eye opened, the seer had been enraptured by the sudden exhibition of a bright and joyous picture: "*O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, filled with the blessing of Jehovah, possess thou the sea and Darom*" (Deut. xxxiii. 23). "Possess thou *the sea*," that is, the Sea of Galilee with its sunny, fertile shores; "*and Darom*," the proper name of the mountain-district, the highlands, probably so called from the southern aspect and bright landscapes.*

* The English version has, instead of "the sea and Darom," "the west and the south." The Hebrew word for the "sea" is also applied to the "west," because the sea was the western boundary of Palestine; and the word *Darom*, though in this passage a proper name, also signifies "the south," or "a southern region." Thus the error in translation originated; an error which the geographer alone could detect and correct.

How expressive are these words! They throw light too on a somewhat obscure passage in the New Testament. When our Lord left his native Nazareth, and made Capernaum his home, and the country around it the scene of his miracles and his teachings, Matthew says,—and here again, in order to bring out the full meaning of the sacred writer, I must somewhat alter our English version, usually so correct and so beautiful,—"And leaving Nazareth he came and dwelt in Capernaum, *which is upon the sea coast*, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, *the region of the sea*, *Peræa*, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light" (Matt. iv. 13–16). Here, be it observed, the district called "the region of the sea," is the same which Moses calls "the sea;" and "Galilee of the Gentiles" was the name given in the time of Isaiah and of our Lord to the more ancient "Darom."

HISTORY OF NAPHTALI.

It is interesting and instructive to note the effect which its geographical position had upon the character and history of Naphtali. It was separated from the great body of the nation. The power of Israel lay in the mountains of Ephraim and Judah. The plain of Jezreel, so often swept by foreign armies and desert hordes, almost cut off communication with Naphtali, and left that tribe isolated and helpless amid its mountains. Need we wonder that under such circumstances it showed timidity and indecision —that it shrunk from active warfare, and left some of its allotted cities in the hands of the Canaanites, rather than battle for its rights (Judges i. 33). Even Barak, Naphtali's most renowned warrior, refused to take the field until Deborah consented to accompany him,—"If thou wilt go with me, then I will go; but if thou wilt not go with me, I will not go;" to which the prophetess rebuking replied, that his

hesitation would strip him of his glory, and confer it on a woman (Judges iv. 6–9). But, on the other hand, when the tribe was once forced to war, when driven to bay, as it were, by an implacable foe—when hesitation and timidity could not secure safety, then the Naphtalites showed the activity, the endurance, and the heroic spirit of mountaineers. Sisera learned this from fatal experience on the banks of the Kishon. Viewed thus in the light of history we can understand the meaning of Jacob's blessing, "*Naphtali is a hind let loose*" (Gen. xlix. 21). It would seem as if the patriarch's eye had swept these northern mountains, and had selected one of their own *gazelles* as a fit emblem of the tribe. Ever timid and undecided at first—more inclined to flee than to fight; but when once brought to bay, a fierce, active, and dangerous foe. Some have said our English version is here wrong. I cannot see it. The rendering of the Hebrew is literal and grammatical. The allusion is beautiful and true (compare 2 Sam. ii. 18; 1 Chron. xii. 8).

The geographical position of Naphtali produced other effects upon its history. The tribe occupied border-land. It came into close contact with the Syrians of Damascus, with the mountain tribes of Lebanon, and especially with the great commercial nation of Phœnicia. Separated from the body of the Jewish people, forced into connection with strangers, the Naphtalites became less exclusive than their brethren. The Phœnicians traded with them, and settled among them (1 Kings ix. 11–13). That sharp line which separated Jew and Gentile was in part at least obliterated. In worship, in manners, and even in language, they accommodated themselves to their Gentile neighbours, and, at length, the whole land was called "Galilee of the Gentiles," and its people lost caste with the exclusive Jews of the South. These facts may help to explain the question of Nathanael, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John i. 46); and the remark of the woman regard-

ing Peter, "Thou art a Galilean, and *thy speech agreeth thereto*" (Mark xiv. 70). Placed on the northern frontier, Naphtali bore the first brunt of every invasion from that quarter. The generals of Benhadad of Damascus "smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abel-beth-maachah, and all the land of Naphtali" (1 Kings xv. 20); and Naphtali was the first among the tribes of Israel to fall beneath the power of Assyria, and to feel the captive's chain (2 Kings xv. 29).

MOUNTAIN SCENERY.

It was a sunny day in the month of May I last rode through the tangled thickets of thorns and thistles on the desolate plain of Gennesaret, and after a farewell visit to Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, turned my horse's head towards the mountains of Naphtali. The heat along the shore was intense; but as I climbed the rugged steep, refreshing breezes fanned my cheek, and the perfume of a thousand flowers filled the air. Poppies, anemones, marigolds, convolvulus, star of Bethlehem, and numerous others, clothed the mountain side,—here a field of bright unbroken scarlet; there another of golden yellow; yonder a bank of shrubs and dwarf oaks, all draped and festooned with snow-white convolvulus; and the intervals everywhere filled up with a glowing mosaic of rainbow hues,—

> "And what a wilderness of flowers!
> It seemed as though from all the bowers,
> And fairest fields of all the year,
> The mingled spoil were scattered here."

It was a rugged and toilsome path. Often there was no path at all; and we rode right on up bank, through brake, guiding our course by the frowning battlements of Safed, which loomed against the bright blue sky far overhead. From the hill-side we turned into a wild glen, where the voice of the turtle floated from tree to tree; and the cooing of countless wood-pigeons ran like a stream of soft melody along the jagged cliffs above us.

We stopped at intervals to look out over the country as it gradually opened up behind us. I say *we;* for I was not now alone—a goodly company of pilgrim friends from the far west encircled me, all as fully alive to the beauties of nature and the absorbing interest of "holy places" as I was myself. I remember well one spot where we reined up in a retired nook, under the shade of a huge walnut, to admire a scene of surpassing grandeur. In the foreground, on the left, rose a limestone cliff three hundred feet or more. Half way up was the façade and dark door of an ancient sepulchre. Beyond it away down through the vista of the wild glen, slept the Sea of Galilee in its deep, deep bed. In the back-ground was the mountain-chain of Gilead—a massive wall of rich purple; and on the right, over a forest of brown hill-tops, rose the graceful rounded summit of Tabor.

SAFED—THE EARTHQUAKE.

We pitched our tents beside the castle of Safed, and spent the evening in exploring its ruins. It crowns a peak, two thousand seven hundred and seventy-five feet high, which forms the southern culminating point of the mountains of Naphtali. The town lies along the steep slope beneath, and contains a population of a thousand Jews and two to three thousand Muslems. The houses are ranged like terraces—the roofs of the lower tiers forming the streets of those above. This accounts for the great destruction of property and the terrible sacrifice of human life during the earthquake of 1837. Safed was then much larger than at present; but in a single moment three-fourths of its houses were thrown down, and five thousand of its inhabitants buried beneath them. The poor Jews suffered most. The spectacle presented after the earthquake was heart-rending. Many were killed instantly; others, buried beneath ruins, or wedged in by fallen stones and timber, perished miserably before they could be released; a few

were only extricated after five or six days, covered with wounds, fainting with thirst.

Abundant traces of the earthquake were still there. Many of the largest and best houses in the town shattered and deserted; others, though still habitable, rent from top to bottom; the battlements and towers of the old castle lying in confused heaps; and what was far more impressive than all, and enabled one to form a fuller idea of the appalling catastrophe, the whole surface of the ground, on the top and round the sides of the hill, bore marks of the frightful convulsion;—here, great masses of rock rent and torn; there, huge fissures in the earth, half filled with loose clay and stones from the shivered sides.

Hugh Miller has somewhere said, "The natural boundaries of the geographer are rarely described by right lines. Whenever these occur, however, the geologist may look for something remarkable." Probably Palestine affords the best example of this in the world. From the foot of Hermon to the borders of Edom the Jordan valley is a right line, straight as an arrow; and nowhere else does the geologist meet with such remarkable physical phenomena. The whole valley, as I have shown elsewhere, is a huge fissure in earth's crust, varying from one to thirteen hundred feet in depth. Asphalt is thrown up from its bed; sulphureous vapours and boiling waters are emitted at intervals; while the mountain-chains on each side are every few years shaken to their base by internal convulsions. Safed appears to be one of the grand centres of volcanic action; and it is interesting to note how the hot springs at Tiberias, Gadara, and Callirrhoe on the shore of the Dead Sea, well out in unison with the throbs of its fiery heart.

Safed is one of the four *Jewish* "holy places" in Palestine, and yet it has no Biblical interest. Its castle is a relic of the Crusades, originally built and garrisoned by the heroic Templars. The great attraction of the place now, at least for the Christian pilgrims, is the noble panorama it com-

mands. From its crumbling battlements one gets perhaps the best view of the deep basin of the lake of Tiberias, and the chasm of the Jordan entering and leaving it; and then he can look away out across the plateau of Bashan to its mountain-chain on the eastern horizon. On the south-east is the range of Gilead; and on the south the eye roams at will among the wooded hills, and winding glens, and green plains of Lower Galilee.

KEDESH—NAPHTALI.

I did not take the direct road to Kedesh. It was always my plan in travelling through Bible lands to select the routes of greatest interest, though they might not be the shortest. I did so now. Diverging to the right, I rode round the head of a ravine, and then along the eastern base of a conical hill which overtops Safed. In half an hour we reached the brow of the mountain ridge, overlooking one of the most magnificent prospects in Syria. At our feet lay the plain of the Upper Jordan, covered with verdure, and having the lake Merom sleeping peacefully in its southern end. Beyond it rose Hermon, towering fully ten thousand feet above the plain, its top covered with snow, and sharply defined against the clear blue sky, as if chiselled in marble. To the left the long serried ridge of Lebanon ran away, peak upon peak, all snow-capped, until lost in the distance. We stood spell-bound,—

> "While Admiration, feeding at the eye,
> And still unsated, dwelt upon the scene."

Over the undulating upland plains of Napthali our path now led,—past little villages, through ripening fields of wheat and barley, and across luxuriant wastes, over which gazelles bounded before us in joyous troops. We zigzagged down into the wild ravine of Hendâj, and ate our lunch where a willow drooped its weeping branches over a foaming torrent. On the banks of this stream, farther down, overlooking the "waters of Merom," lie, as we shall

see, the remains of royal Hazor. As we sat there amid gorgeous oleander flowers, the thought occurred to us, that Sisera in his flight probably crossed the glen near this spot; for it was on the high plain to the north he fell by the treacherous hand of Jael.

At length we reached Kedesh, the "sanctuary" (such is the meaning of the name) of Naphtali, and the city of refuge for the northern tribes. The site is beautiful — the summit and sides of a little ridge projecting from wooded heights on the west into a green plain. But the royal city of the Canaanites (Judges xii. 22), "the holy place" of Northern Palestine, is now ruined and desolate. True, there are a few hovels on a corner of the site, and a few shepherds on its pastures; yet the glory and the sacredness of Kedesh have long since departed. Nought remains to mark them save the old name and wide-spread ruins. The ridge is strewn with ruins,—columns half buried in the soil; hewn stones gathered in heaps among cornfields, or built in rude fences around tobacco gardens; and foundations too massive to be removed by the spoiler's hand.

But the most interesting remains are in the plain. The first building I examined was a square mausoleum, massive and simple; its only ornament a bold moulding round the doorway. The interior is cruciform, and contains a number of recesses, or *loculi*, for bodies, in some of which are mouldering bones. I had before seen similar tombs in Bashan and anti-Lebanon. They are all probably of the Roman age. Not far distant is a group of beautiful sarcophagi, placed together on a platform of solid masonry some six feet high. I have seen hundreds of sarcophagi elsewhere in Palestine and Syria, but none like these. Two of them are double,—that is, each block has two graves excavated in it, side by side, and covered by one lid. There are also two single ones—six in all. They were richly carved and sculptured; and although much worn, we can

discover wreaths of leaves and pine cones along the sides of one, rams' heads at the angles of another, and an eagle on another.

To the east of these are the ruins of a temple. The portico has fallen, and its Corinthian columns are almost covered with thorns and thistles. A triple doorway, handsomely ornamented with wreaths of fruit and flowers, remains perfect. On the lintel of one of the side-doors is an eagle with expanded wings.

Dr. Robinson supposed that these remains were of Jewish origin; and there seemed some cause for the belief in the fact, that a Jewish tradition of the middle ages placed here the sepulchres and monuments of Barak, Deborah, and Jael. When I saw them I thought the style of the architecture and the sculptures on the sarcophagi were Roman or Grecian rather than Jewish. Other travellers have since examined them more thoroughly, and the result shows that my impressions were correct. An altar has been discovered at the large building, with a Greek inscription, almost obliterated, containing a dedication to "the gods."

BARAK'S VICTORY.

Kedesh was the birth-place of Barak, Naphtali's hero and Israel's deliverer. From Kedesh Deborah summoned him to fight the battle of his country, and from hence he marched at the head of ten thousand brave men. At Kedesh was thus enacted the first scene of that historic drama; and beside it the last act also was performed. At that time the tribe of Heber the Kenite was encamped "at the terebinths of Zaanaim, which is by Kedesh" (Judges iv. 11). . . . . It was the second day after the battle on Esdraelon; but the news had not yet reached these mountains. From the towers of Hazor watchmen looked in vain for a messenger; and the mother of Sisera called from her window, "Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots?" (v. 28). On the evening

of that day, a solitary footman is seen approaching the tent of Heber. His step is tottering; his dress rent and covered with mire; in his face is pictured black despair. Jael hastens forth to meet him. It is Sisera. She needs to ask no questions, for she can read the whole story at a glance. And hark! the cries of the pursuers already echo through the mountains. See! their weapons flash amid the foliage. "Turn in, my lord, turn in to me—fear not." He turned in to the tent. "Give me a little water—I am thirsty." She gave him milk: he drank, and sank exhausted into sleep. It was his last sleep. Jael took an iron *tent-pin* in one hand, and a heavy mallet in the other, and by a single blow pierced the temples of the sleeping warrior. So died Sisera.

Beneath the shade of a terebinth, by the ruins of Kedesh, I read this tragic tale. Before me, in a forest glade, were the black tents of some Turkmans, modern representatives of the Kenites. I saw the large iron tent-pins; I saw the mallets with which the women drive them into the ground when encamping, for this is their work. I saw the women themselves—strong, active, fierce-looking women, just as fancy would picture a Jael. There was little wanting to complete the scene. That little imagination easily supplied; and there again was realized before me one of the most graphic of Bible stories.

BETH-REHOB.

I rode on north-east for two hours through a richly wooded country, and then came out on the eastern brow of the mountain range. A sharp descent of twenty minutes brought me to the village of Hunîn. The great attraction here is the castle, now in ruins, but exhibiting in its massive foundations and shattered towers specimens of the workmanship of every race that held the country from the Phœnicians to the Turks. The site is most commanding,—a terrace on the steep mountain side, a thousand feet above

the plain of Dan. Facing it, on the opposite range of Hermon, I saw the ruins of Cæsarea Philippi. The sacred writer, in telling the story of the capture of Laish by the Danites, says it was situated "*in the valley that lieth by Beth-Rehob*" (Judges xviii. 28). There was the valley below me, and yonder little rounded hill in the midst of it is the site of Laish. Is not this therefore Beth-Rehob?

I here bade adieu to the mountains of Naphtali, and rode over to the fountains of the Jordan.

THE INVASION OF TIGLATH-PILESER.

During another tour, made at the same season of the year, I traversed Naphtali from north to south. Crossing the Leontes at the Castle of Shukîf, I rode over a low ridge into the beautiful plain of Merj 'Ayûn, which lies on the northern frontier of Naphtali. I ascended the isolated tell Dibbîn, at the upper end of the plain. It is about a hundred feet high, and on its flat top and round base are heaps of stones and rubbish. The tell takes its name from a neighbouring village, but the name of the plain is ancient. It is not difficult to recognise the Hebrew *Ijon* in the Arabic *'Ayûn*. On this spot stood Ijon, the first city captured by Benhadad when he invaded Northern Palestine (1 Kings xv. 20), and the first taken by Tiglath-pileser (2 Kings xv. 29).

I was now prepared to trace the route of the Assyrian conqueror—that route along which he led so many weeping captives in his train.

I rode down through fields of corn and green meadows to the foot of the plain, some five miles from Ijon. Here, on the top of a little conical hill, stands the village of *Abel*, on the site of *Abel-beth-Maachah*, the second city captured by Tiglath-pileser. From it the Assyrians ascended the mountains and marched upon Kedesh. I rode southwards along their eastern base to survey the plain of Hûleh (or Merom), and search for the site of Hazor.

After a long ride, the incidents of which I must here pass over, I reached an undulating plain lying between the foot of the mountains and the western shore of the waters of Merom. Ascending a projecting ridge, I examined the country minutely, and felt convinced that I had before me the battle-field where Joshua overthrew the northern confederacy: "*So Joshua came against them at the waters of Merom suddenly*" (xi. 7). If so, where was Hazor? It must have been close at hand, for after the pursuit was over, "*Joshua turned back and took Hazor.*"

SITE OF HAZOR DISCOVERED.

The incidental notices of the sacred writers place Hazor south of Kedesh (Josh. xix. 36; 2 Kings xv. 29); and Josephus states that it was situated *over* the lake of Merom, and so close to it that the plain round the lake was called by its name.

Beside where I sat was the mouth of the ravine of Hendâj. Mounting my horse, I followed a broad path, like an old highway, up its southern bank, and soon came upon the ruins of an ancient city. Not a building—not even a foundation was perfect. Large cisterns, heaps of stones, mounds of rubbish, prostrate columns, the remains of a temple, and an altar with a Greek inscription—such were the ruins strewn over this site. I thought at the time that these might be the ruins of Hazor, and I have since become more and more confirmed in the belief.

From this interesting spot I rode over the mountains to Safed, and thence I took a straight course down a rugged hill side, and across undulating table-land overgrown with thickets of gigantic thistles, to the mouth of the Jordan, where it enters the Sea of Galilee. It was a toilsome but most interesting ride, affording a clear view at once of the wonderful richness of the soil, and no less wonderful desolation of the country.

Having thus traversed Naphtali, which constitutes the

eastern division of Northern Palestine, I now turn to Phœnicia the *Western.*

PHŒNICIA.

Along the whole sea-board of Palestine extends a low plain, twenty miles wide at the southern end, but at the northern a mere strip. In Bible times it was divided into three provinces,—Philistia, Sharon, and Phœnicia. The ridge of Carmel separated the two latter. At its northern base is the plain of Acre, reaching inland till it joins Esdraelon. But the mountains of Naphtali first, and then the loftier and bolder chain of Lebanon, shoot out their western roots, and the coast-plain, from Achzib to the entrance of Hamath, does not average more than a mile in breadth, and is often intersected by rocky promontories. On this narrow tract, under the shadow of Lebanon, stood the world-renowned cities of Tyre and Sidon.

The founders of Phœnicia were Sidon, Arvad, and Arki (Gen. x. 15–18) sons of Canaan, and consequently, in the Bible as well as on their own coins and monuments, the people are always called "Canaanites" (Judges i. 31, 32). The name *Phœnicia* is of Greek origin, and probably derived from the "palms" (*phœnikes*) that once waved on the sunny plain. Phœnicia was the great mother of commerce—the England, in fact, of the Old World. The proudest cities along the shores of the Mediterranean were her daughters; Carthage, Syracuse, Cadiz, Marseilles, and many others. The plain of Phœnicia was included in the Land of Promise (Josh. xiii. 4–6), but the Israelites were unable, and probably unwilling, to expel the wealthy and powerful traders (Judges i. 31, 32). David and Solomon even sought their aid as seamen, and took advantage of their skill as architects (2 Sam. v. 11; 1 Kings v.; ix. 27).

Thus, while the sacred interest that clusters round every spot in Palestine can scarce be said to find a place in Phœnicia, there is a historic interest in its wave-washed ruins

that makes them dear to the scholar; and there is an occasional connection between them and Bible story, which awakens the attention of the Christian. Elijah's miracle at Zarephath, a city of Sidon (1 Kings xvii. 9; Luke iv. 26), our Lord's interview with the Syro-Phœnician woman (Matt. xv. 21; Mark vii. 26), and the Apostle Paul's visits to Tyre (Acts xxi. 3), Sidon (xxvii. 3) and Ptolemais (xxi. 7), can never be forgotten. Phœnicia, too, is full of prophetic interest. The infallible truth of Scripture is written upon her desolate shores.

THE SEA COAST.

My first ride through Phœnicia was a continuation of one of my earliest tours in the Holy Land. Many years have passed since then, but the scenes are still fresh before the eye of memory. From Nazareth I journeyed westward through the wooded hills of Galilee and across the rich plain to Acre. Accho, or Ptolemais, has little Biblical interest, so I pass it and ride northward to Achzib, one of those cities which Asher thought it best to leave, with Accho and Zidon, in the hands of the Phœnicians (Judges i. 31). The hills were now close upon my right, clothed with *olive* groves, which brought to my mind Moses' blessing upon Asher—"*Let him dip his foot in oil*" (Deut. xxxiii. 24). I scaled the Tyrian Ladder, a bold headland which shoots far into the sea, and in two hours more I clambered up the dizzy staircase to the top of the White Cape—a perpendicular cliff of limestone rising hundreds of feet from the bosom of the deep; along its brow the ancient and only road is carried, hewn in the living rock. Thence I pushed onwards and encamped at the fountains of Tyre.

Nearly the whole shore from the Tyrian Ladder northwards was strewn with ruins. Heaps of hewn stones and quantities of marble tesseræ lay in my path; while broken shafts and mounds of rubbish were seen to the right and left—here crowning a cliff, there washed by the waves.

One thing I specially noted: from the time I left Achzib till I reached the fountains I did not see a human being,—a mournful and solitary silence reigns along Phœnicia's coast.

TYRE.

I spent two days at Tyre, and they were not the least interesting of my pilgrimage. I first examined the fountains, now called *Ras-el-'Ain.* They are natural springs, four in number, encircled by massive walls, which raise the water high enough to supply the city, to which it was taken on arched aqueducts more than three miles in length. Next I minutely surveyed the desolate site of "Old Tyre," *Palætyrus;* and then crossing Alexander's mole, I explored the whole remains of "New Tyre." The results of that and other examinations I have detailed elsewhere (*Hand-book*), and need not repeat here.

Tyre was a double city, or rather there were two cities of the same name, an *old* and a *new.* The former stood on the main-land, the latter on an island opposite, half a mile from the shore. Of Old Tyre not a vestige remains. I searched the plain on which it stood without discovering a single fragment of a wall, or a trace of a foundation, or even a heap of rubbish. History accounts for this remarkable fact. Three centuries before Christ the city was taken by Alexander the Great, who immediately proceeded to besiege New Tyre on the island. Not being able to reach its walls with his engines, he collected the whole remains of the old city—stones, timber, rubbish—threw them into the narrow channel, and thus formed a causeway.

Here we have one of the most striking fulfilments of prophecy on record. Three centuries before Alexander the Great was born Ezekiel wrote,—"Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I am against thee, O Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up. *And they shall destroy the walls of*

Tyrus, and break down her towers: I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. . . . . They shall lay thy stones, and thy timber, and thy dust in the midst of the water. . . . . I will make thee a terror, and thou shalt be no more: though thou be sought for, yet shalt thou never be found again, saith the Lord God" (xxvi. 3, 4, 12, 21).

Would it not seem as if the prophet had drawn aside the veil which shrouds futurity, and looking down through five-and-twenty centuries, had seen that bare, unmarked, deserted plain as I saw it? One might even imagine that his prophetic eye had been able to distinguish a solitary traveller from a far distant land wandering up and down, searching, but searching in vain, for the city of which he said, "Though thou be sought for, yet shalt thou never be found again."

New Tyre is now represented by a poor village. The ancient "mistress of the seas" can only boast of a few fishing-boats. The modern houses of a better class have had their walls so shattered by earthquakes that the inhabitants have deserted them; and the modern ramparts are so ruinous that I went in and out over them in several places. The most imposing ruin is that of the cathedral, built in the fourth century, for which Eusebius, the ecclesiastical historian, wrote a consecration sermon, and in which William, the historian of the Crusades, presided as archbishop.

But one thing especially struck me in wandering over the site of Tyre. Along the shores of the peninsula lie huge sea-beaten fragments of the old wall, and piles of granite and marble columns. They are bare as the top of a rock; and here and there I saw the fishermen spreading out their nets upon them, to dry in the bright sunshine. When I saw them, I sat down on one of the highest fragments, and read, with mingled feelings of wonder and awe, the words of Ezekiel,—"*I will make thee like the top of a rock; thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon*" (xxvi. 14).

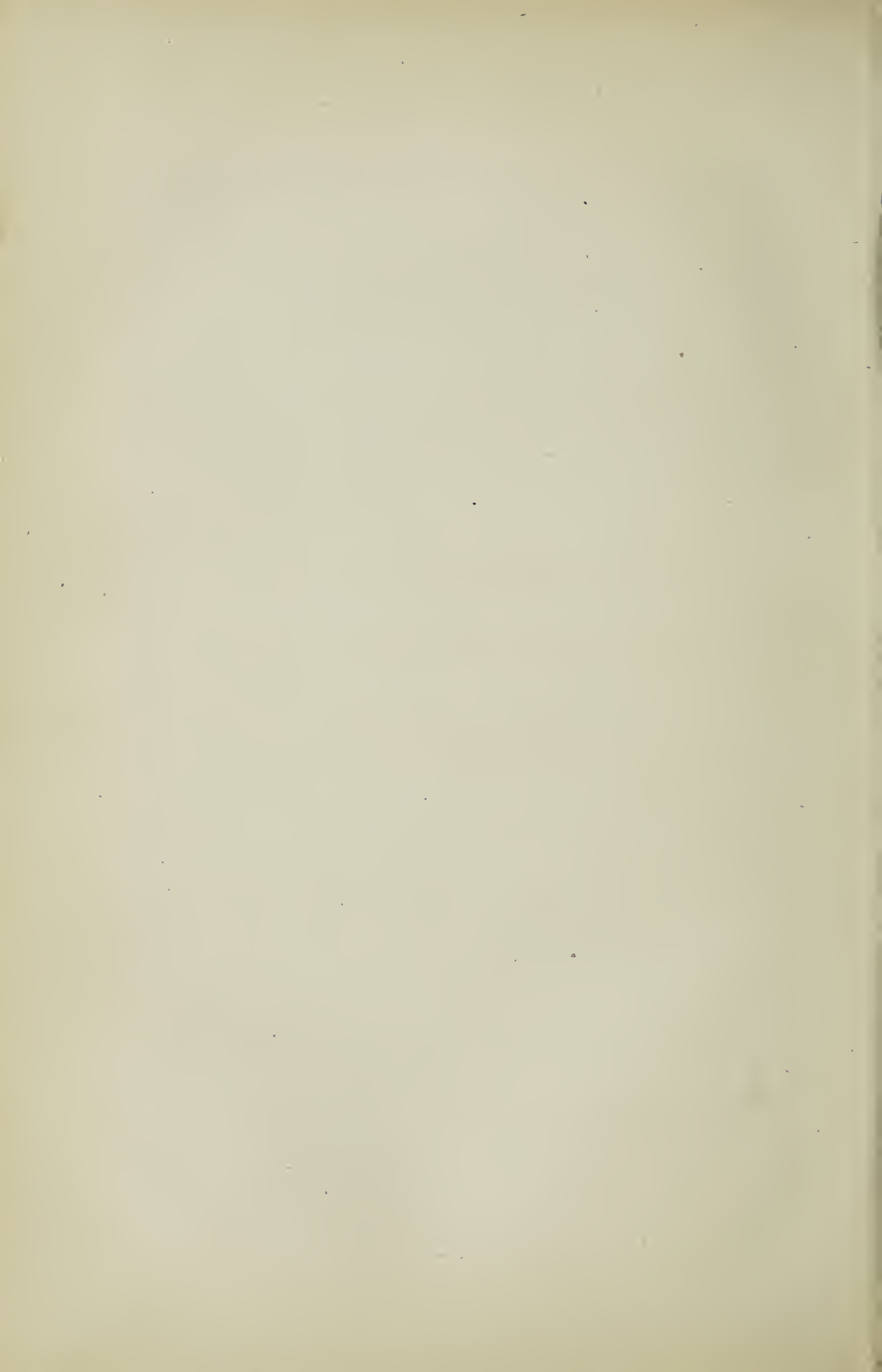
SIDON.

From Tyre to Sidon I rode in six hours, stopping in the interval to examine the desolate site of the city of Sarepta, and to read the story of Elijah's visit and miracle (1 Kings xvii. 9–24). The aspect of Tyre is bleak and bare, but that of Sidon rich and blooming. In fact, it is one of the most picturesque towns in Syria. It stands on a low hill which juts out into the Mediterranean, and is defended by old but picturesque walls and towers. On a rocky islet, connected with the city by a broken bridge, is a ruined castle, once the defence of the harbour. The ancient architectural remains about Sidon are few,—some marble and granite columns, some pieces of mosaic pavement, and some fragments of sculptured cornice. But the tombs are interesting. They dot the plain and the mountain side beyond, and have already yielded a rich harvest to the antiquary,—Phœnician sarcophagi, Greek coins, funeral ornaments, and crystal vases. They would still repay a fuller inspection.

The gardens and orchards of Sidon are charming. Oranges, lemons, citrons, bananas, and palms, grow luxuriantly, and give the environs of the old city a look of eternal spring. Sidon is one of the few spots in Syria where nature's luxuriance has triumphed over neglect and ruin, and where a few relics of ancient prosperity still remain in street, and mart, and harbour. It is instructive to compare Tyre and Sidon. The former far outstripped the latter in grandeur, wealth, and power, but its history has been briefer and more momentous. Once and again the tide of war swept over Tyre, first leaving the *old* city desolate, and then the *new* in ruins. Sidon has been more fortunate, or perhaps I should say less unfortunate. The tide of war swept over it too, but the wave was not so destructive.

How are we to account for this marked difference in the history of two cities, founded by the same race, standing

upon the same shore, almost within sight of each other, inhabited by the same people, and exposed to the same dangers? Human foresight, had it been asked, would have pronounced Tyre the more secure, because its position rendered it almost impregnable. The Spirit of prophecy judged otherwise. And in answering this question, the thoughtful reader of the Bible and the thoughtful student of history will not overlook the fact, that while Sidon's name is lightly passed over by the Hebrew prophets, the curses pronounced upon Tyre are among the most sweeping and terrible in the whole scope of prophecy.





NORTHERN BORDER LAND.







I.

Lebanon.

"His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars."—CANT. V. 15.

LEBANON was the paradise of the Hebrew poets; and it is not strange that it should have been so. For grandeur of scenery, richness of products, and beauty of climate, it is not surpassed in the world. After Egypt's marshy plains, and Sinai's naked cliffs, and the parched desert of dreary Arabia, need we wonder that when Moses looked on Lebanon — its snow-crowned peaks towering to heaven, its sides all waving with foliage—he should have thus breathed forth to God the desire of his heart: "I pray thee let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon"? (Deut. iii. 25.)

Those only can realize the luxury of shade and verdure who have traversed under an eastern sun an eastern wilderness. Solomon, in the matchless imagery of his Song, catches with all a poet's skill and with all a poet's enthusiasm the leading beauties of Lebanon. To the inhabitant of Jerusalem, parched with heat on a sultry summer's day, the heaven above his head brass, the white walls, and white rocks, and white hills all round him glowing like a furnace—no fountain, river, or lake, no green meadow, no cool shade in view—what could convey to his mind a more enchanting vision than the words suggested by the scenery of these mountains,—"A garden inclosed is my sister, a fount-

ain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon"? (iv. 12, 15.) His eye also upon the freshness of Lebanon's primeval forests, its forests of cedar, and pine, and evergreen oak, and upon the grandeur of its outline, the poet-king delineates the glory of the spouse by a single touch: "His countenance is as Lebanon" (v. 15). And then again, revelling in vivid imagination in those green glades and vine-clad slopes, where the air is laden with perfume, he says of the bride, "The smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon."

How often have I myself luxuriated on banks of sweet thyme, and in deep dells where the myrtle and honeysuckle give forth their odours, and in gardens where the damask rose and orange blossom fill the air with perfumes, amid the heights of Lebanon! How often, too, after days of toil and travel over trackless wastes, without the shadow even of a great rock, my lips parched with thirst, my eye-balls burning in their sockets, when at length I climbed those mountains, and felt their soft breezes fanning my fevered brow, when I quaffed their ice-cold waters, and looked on their snowy peaks glittering under a blazing sun,—how often then have I realized in their full force and meaning the prophet's words, "Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon? or shall the cold-flowing waters be forsaken?" (Jer. xviii. 14.)

Lebanon was ever before the eyes of the ancient Israelite. From every hill top in Central Palestine, from the depths of the Jordan valley, from the lofty table-land of Moab and Bashan, he saw, away on the northern horizon, those beautiful pale blue peaks with their glittering crowns. And when he traversed Galilee, or went down to the shores of its lake, then Lebanon and Hermon rose in all their majesty, appearing to him as visions of paradise. Can we wonder that prophets spake and poets sung of the "glory of Lebanon"? (Isa. xxxv. 2; lx. 13.)

The name *Lebanon* signifies "whiteness;" and it is ap-

propriate whether we look at the whiteness of its limestone cliffs or of the snow upon its summit. It is a singular fact that the names of the highest mountains in most countries have the same meaning. Himalaya, Alps, Mont Blanc, Ben Nevis, Snowdon, Sierra Nevada, are all "white mountains." The name Lebanon in Scripture is applied to two distinct mountain chains which run in parallel lines on opposite sides of the valley of Cœle-Syria. The western range is Lebanon proper, and in Scripture is called by no other name; the eastern is distinguished as "Lebanon towards the sun rising" (Josh. xiii. 5), and its southern peaks are known by many names—Hermon, Sirion, Amanus, &c. Among the people of the country most of the old Bible names are still used; but more commonly "Lebanon towards the sun rising," the Anti-Libanus of classic authors, is called *Jebel esh-Shurky*, the "Eastern mountain," while Lebanon proper is styled *Jebel el-Ghurby*, the "Western mountain." To Hermon is given the noble title *Jebel esh-Sheikh*, "Prince mountain," and it deserves it.

To the grand scenery, waving fruit, and holy and historic associations of Lebanon proper, I shall now endeavour to introduce my reader.

PHYSICAL FEATURES OF LEBANON.

The range of Lebanon is about a hundred miles long. It follows the shore of the Mediterranean, here sending out rugged roots far into the sea, and here leaving a strip of plain bordered by a pebbly strand. This plain has a famous name and a proud history of its own. It is *Phœnicia*, the England of antiquity; and on it stood the great cities of Sidon and Tyre, the cradles of the world's commerce. Lebanon looked proudly down on these her fair daughters.

From the green meadows of Esdraelon rise, in graceful undulations, the wooded hills of Galilee. The hills of Galilee swell up into the picturesque mountains of Naphtali; and these again stretch across the sublime ravine of the

Leontes and tower into the majestic ridge of Lebanon. Commencing at an elevation of six thousand feet, this ridge increases gradually to nearly eleven thousand, and then terminates abruptly in the valley called by Moses the "entrance of Hamath" (Num. xxxiv. 8).

The eastern declivities of Lebanon are steep and rugged; but the western are long and gradual, furrowed from top to bottom by wild ravines, and broken everywhere by white cliffs and rugged banks, and tens of thousands of terraces, which rise like stairs from the sea to the snow wreaths. These western declivities are the "roots of Lebanon," massive, broad, and far-reaching. One can see as he wanders over them how graphic and expressive was the language of Hosea: "I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall grow as the lily, *and strike forth his roots as Lebanon*" (xiv. 5).

BEYROUT.

The classic *Berytus*, famous for its school of philosophy, and the modern *Beyrout*, has no place in the Bible. Yet it is now the capital of Lebanon, and the only real sea-port of Syria. Western enterprise has given it an air of prosperity, while grim desolation is elsewhere brooding over the land.

The site of Beyrout is among the finest in the world. From the base of Lebanon a triangular plain juts into the sea, and round a little bay on its northern shore nestles the nucleus of the city, engirt by old walls and towers. Behind the city the ground rises with a gentle slope, and is thickly studded with villas of every graceful form which Eastern fancy, grafted on Western taste, can devise; and all embosomed in the foliage of the orange, mulberry, and palm. In spring time and summer Beyrout is beautiful. The glory of Lebanon behind, a mantle of verdure wrapped closely round it, fringed by a pearly strand; in front the boundless sea, bright and blue as the heavens that over-arch it. Such is Beyrout.

THE DOG RIVER AND ITS MONUMENTS.

It was near noon on a bright April day when I mounted my favourite Nezîk—one of the prettiest and wildest of Arab horses—at the gate of Beyrout. My servants and muleteers were already hours in advance; and Nezîk, as he champed the bit and pawed the ground, showed his eagerness to follow.

The mulberry groves and cactus-lined lanes were soon passed. For a moment I drew up in the bay of St. George, to take another look at the fabled scene of our patron saint's conflict with the dragon, with which the fine old crown pieces have made English eyes so familiar. Then fording the sluggish Magoras, I reached the silver strand that here stretches for miles along the Mediterranean. Loosening the rein an hour's gallop brought me to the foot of the famous pass of the Dog River.

One of Lebanon's great "roots" here strikes far out, and dips, a rocky precipice, into the bosom of the deep. Over the rugged cliff the Egyptian Sesostris, thirteen centuries B.C., cut a zigzag road. Seven hundred years later the road was repaired by the Assyrian Sennacherib, when on his march to the fatal plain of Libnah, (2 Kings xviii. 13, &c.) Then, after a still longer interval, came the Roman Antonine, and reconstructed the pass. And since his day the Turks and the French, if they have done little in the way of repairs, have at least indulged their vanity by leaving a record of their presence.

The long history of the pass is written upon its rocky sides. Nine tablets are there, each as big as an ordinary door. Three are Egyptian, and six Assyrian; the latter distinguished by quaint, stiff figures, and yards of cuneiform letters. The Roman tablet is of more moderate dimensions: plain, and matter-of-fact, like the men who made it. The Turks have as many flourishes in their letters, as in their legend; and the French, with characteristic modesty, have,

it is said, for their visit was subsequent to mine, appropriated one of the Egyptian panels.

How strange to see in one spot, at one glance, inscribed records extending back in succession almost to the time of Moses! To see there, too, monumental evidence of one of the most remarkable incidents in Bible history—the expedition of Sennacherib! The tablets on this pass are not surpassed in interest or importance by any monuments in Syria.

Scrambling up the ancient road, and round the edge of a dizzy crag, the glen of *Nahr el-Kelb* opened suddenly before me. It was a scene of singular grandeur. Away in the depths beneath dashed the mad torrent in sheets of foam, over its rocky bed. Its banks fringed with oleander, now wet with spray, and glistening under the bright sunbeams. Above rose jagged precipices of white limestone, crowned far overhead by a convent and a village.

On a former occasion I traced the river to its source, through rich Alpine scenery which gave me a vivid picture of "the glory of Lebanon." Now my course was different. I followed the deeply indented shore; and after an hour's hard ride cooled my horse's foaming sides in

THE RIVER ADONIS.

A few days before my visit heavy rain had fallen in Lebanon; and I had therefore an opportunity of seeing Adonis "run purple to the sea;" its waters tinged with the earth the swollen torrent tore from the mountain sides. The fable of Venus and Adonis is well known. The Greeks borrowed it from the Syrians; and the bank of this stream was the scene of the catastrophe. The story has a sacred as well as a classic interest. Adonis was probably identical with *Tammuz*, for whom Ezekiel represents the infatuated Jewish women as weeping (viii. 14); and our own Milton has thrown around the heathen fable and the prophetic vision all the charms of his matchless verse:—

——"Thammuz came next behind,
Whose annual wound in Lebanon allured
The Syrian damsels to lament his fate
In amorous ditties all a summer's day;
While smooth Adonis from his native rock
Ran purple to the sea supposed with blood
Of Thammuz, yearly wounded."

I rode slowly on, looking up at Lebanon, as peak after peak revealed itself; and now out over the boundless Mediterranean gleaming like burnished gold beneath the evening sun.

GEBAL.

I found my tent pitched under the crumbling ramparts of Gebal; and dismounted at its door as the sun touched the water.

Jebeil, the modern name of this town, is the diminutive of the Hebrew *Gebal*, which signifies "mountain." The city was the capital of the *Giblites*, or "mountaineers," the leading tribe of Lebanon in the days of Joshua (xiii. 5). The Giblites appear to have been an educated and an enterprising people in a very remote age. They were Solomon's chief architects when he built the Temple; though unfortunately our English version in 1 Kings v. 18, conceals the fact, by rendering *Giblites* "stone squarers." They were famous, too, as ship-builders; for the ancients of Gebal and "the wise men thereof" were leading men in the dock-yards of Tyre (Ezek. xxvii. 9).

It is most interesting to observe how fully even incidental allusions of the sacred writers are confirmed and illustrated by the facts of ancient history and the results of modern research. During the wars of Alexander the Great, the fleet of Gebal, or *Byblus* as the Greeks called it, was a formidable power in the Levant. When, on the morning after my arrival, I proceeded to explore the ruins, I was particularly struck with the massive and splendid masonry of the ancient citadel. Some of its stones are twenty feet long, and in their size, style, and perfection of finish, they

closely resemble those I had before seen in the foundations of the Temple at Jerusalem. May it not be that the very same workmen were employed in the erection of both buildings?

But the glory of Gebal has passed away. Its massive walls are rent and shattered; its harbour is a ruin; its navy is reduced to some half-dozen fishing boats; and its population now consists of about six hundred poor peasants.

TRIPOLI.

A pleasant ride of eight hours took me from Gebal to Tripoli. My road lay still along the shore: now winding over the brow of a cliff, now diving down a break-neck path into a dell, now treading softly the pebbly shore on which the ever restless waves made solemn melody. Little villages, and convents, and vineyards, and groves of figs and olives, tell of modern industry, and Lebanon's fruitfulness; but wide-spread ruins, and shattered battlements, and deserted harbours, tell still more impressively of departed greatness.

Tripoli is a picturesque town of thirteen thousand inhabitants, embosomed in gardens and orchards of orange, apricot, and apple trees. Its fruits rival those of Joppa and Sidon. The surrounding plain is a little paradise, covered with verdure, and sparkling with stream and fountain. A triangular promontory juts out from the town into the Mediterranean, and on its northern shore, a mile and a half distant, is the *Mina* or port of Tripoli. This promontory was the site of the ancient city—the *Tripolis*, or "Triple City" of the Greeks, which, tradition says, was so named because it was founded by three colonies from Tyre, Sidon, and Arvad. I traced the ruins of the old walls along the neck of the promontory, and around its shores; and I saw columns of granite and marble, with heaps of stones and rubbish, scattered over its surface. During the first Crusade, Raymond of Toulouse built a castle inland on the banks of

the Kadîsha, for the protection of Christian pilgrims; and around it the modern town has grown.

ASCENT OF LEBANON.

The sun had not yet risen over Mount Hor (Num. xxxiv. 7) when I set out for the Cedars. For nearly two hours I rode along the northern bank of the Kadîsha, where it cuts its way through the lower spurs of Lebanon. Then the real ascent commenced. It was no child's play to climb that mountain. The road is a mere goat track; now in a rocky torrent bed, now on the brink of a fearful ravine, now over a slippery crown of naked limestone, now up rude stairs that seem as if "let down from heaven itself." Many a bad and dangerous path I have travelled in Syria, but this was among the very worst. Never before, not even when ascending Hermon, had the mettle and the steadiness of Nezîk been more severely tested. I confess, too, that my own nerve was sometimes tried, when I found one stirrup ringing against the overhanging cliff, while the other was suspended over a fathomless abyss. The pass was often such as that which Rogers paints:—

> "The very path for them that dare defy
> Danger, nor shrink, wear what shape he will;
> That o'er the caldron, when the flood boils up,
> Hang as in air."

But the scenery was glorious. Villages all around, clinging to the cliffs, or nestling away down in deep secluded dells,—convents, like feudal castles, perched on every airy crag and hill top,—vines springing from chinks in the rock, and sending their long branches in festoons down its jagged sides,—ranges of figs and mulberries covering terraces which the hand of industry has formed everywhere from the bottom of the deepest glen to the summit of the highest peak. Little isolated patches, and narrow, ribbon-like strips of green corn were there too. Art and industry, in fact, appeared as if triumphing over nature; while nature

itself, in all its magnificent ruggedness, rejoiced in the triumph.

On crowning each successive eminence I looked down with ever increasing wonder and admiration on new scenes of mingled richness and grandeur. It is only under such circumstances, and after such experience, one can thoroughly comprehend the meaning of the prophet when he says, "It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing, the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it" (Isa. xxxv. 2); or of the psalmist when he utters the promise, "There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains, the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon" (lxxii. 16).

I spent the night at the village of Ehden, which for beauty might almost pass for an Eden. Beneath the shade of one of its fragrant walnuts I lay the long afternoon gazing dreamily down the mountain side, and away out over the boundless sea. How sweet and fresh on that balmy evening, when the dew began to fall, was "the smell of Lebanon"!

The direct road from Ehden to the Cedars contains nothing of interest, so I rode down in the early morning to Kanobîn, the most celebrated of the Maronite convents, and the chief residence of the Patriarch. Its site is singularly romantic. A little above it the glen of the Kadîsha contracts to a sublime chasm, its rocky walls rising perpendicularly a thousand feet on each side, and in places not leaving room for a footpath beside the stream that foams along the bottom. On a ledge of one of these stupendous cliffs, partly natural and partly artificial, stands Kanobîn. Its church and some of its cells are hewn in the rock; and many a strange and stirring legend is told of the fathers who excavated and inhabited them. The Patriarch was absent, but I was kindly and hospitably received by the monks. In going round their shrines I could not suppress feelings of shame—almost of horror, at the parody of Christ-

ianity which is there exhibited. Except in name the church at Kanobîn differs little from the shrines of Baal, which probably occupied the same place in the days of the old Giblites.

The road from Kanobîn to the Cedars passes through some of the grandest and richest scenery in Lebanon. It winds up the glen of the Kadîsha, which gradually expands into terraced slopes, covered with vineyards, and the brilliant foliage of the mulberry. Picturesque cottages, and the mansions of hereditary sheikhs, here grouped together, there scattered singly among gardens and orchards, stud the whole banks. The cultivation is wonderful. Every little dell away down beneath overhanging cliffs, every nook and corner among the jagged rocks, every ledge and cranny on precipice side, which the foot of man can reach, or on which a basket of earth can be deposited, is occupied with vine, or mulberry, or patch of grain.

THE CEDARS.

At the head of Wady Kadîsha is a vast recess in the central ridge of Lebanon. Round it in a semicircle rise the loftiest peaks of the range, their summits glittering with perpetual snow. The sides of the recess are smooth, white, uniform, and perfectly bare; and in its centre, on the top of a limestone knoll, far removed from all other foliage and verdure, stand, in strange solitude, the *Cedars of Lebanon.* Seen from a distance, the little grove is but a speck on the mountain side; and the first feeling of the pilgrim who has travelled far to visit it is that of bitter disappointment. But when he enters all such feelings vanish. Then the beautiful fan-like branches, and graceful forms of the younger trees, the colossal trunks of the patriarchs, and their great gnarled arms stretching far out to embrace their brethren, and the deep and sombre shade amid that blaze of sunshine, —all combine to excite his admiration.

The grove is scarcely half a mile in circuit, and in some

places is not dense. It contains only about *four hundred* trees of all sizes. A dozen of them are very ancient, one or two measuring upwards of forty feet in girth, and the others not much less; but their trunks are short, and are much hacked and hewn by the vandalism of travellers. Thirty or forty others are of very respectable dimensions—three, four, and even five feet in diameter. The younger trees are mostly in the outskirts of the groves, and the patriarchs in the centre. The grove would increase were it not that the seedlings are either cropped by goats, or broken by shepherds. At present there are no very young trees.

This was my second visit to the Cedars; and the impression made upon my mind was even deeper than before,—probably in part owing to the solitude. My former visit was during the annual feast, when the grove was filled with noise and riot. Now, not a living creature was there, and the snow wreaths still lay deep around the sacred trees. I had ample time to examine their grandeur and beauty, and to meditate on their long and glorious history. And as I looked, I could not wonder that the Hebrews regarded them with almost religious veneration, and that their prophets called them the "trees of the Lord" (Ps. civ. 16), and the place where they grew "the garden of God" (Ezek. xxxi. 8). Nor could I wonder that Hebrew poets selected such graceful foliage, and stately forms, and colossal trunks, as emblems of pride, and majesty, and power. "The day of the Lord of hosts," writes Isaiah, "shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low; *and upon all the cedars of Lebanon that are high and lifted up*" (ii. 12, 13). And Ezekiel says, "Behold, *the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon with fair branches, ... and of an high stature; . . . . his height was exalted above all the trees of the field,*" &c. (xxxi. 3, &c.)

As I sat there alone in the Cedar Grove, the Psalmist's magnificent picture of a storm was brought more vividly

before my mind than ever it had been before. A huge branch of one of the oldest trees had recently been broken by a tempest, and in its fall had partly destroyed a younger tree. There it lay before my eyes, amid the ruin it had caused, as if to show the power of the storm, and to illustrate the words of the Psalmist. I read the words, looking out, as I read, upon those "great waters" whence the voice of the storm came, and upon those mountain sides up which it rolled, and upon those cedars which it brake:—

> "The voice of Jehovah is upon the waters;
> The God of glory thundereth:
> Jehovah is upon great waters.
> The voice of Jehovah is power;
> The voice of Jehovah is majesty.
> The voice of Jehovah breaketh the cedars,
> Jehovah breaketh the cedars of Lebanon;
> He maketh them skip like a calf."
> (Ps. xxix. 3–6.)

A piece of the broken branch I afterwards obtained, and brought to this country; and I retain some of it still in its natural state. Having read many contradictory accounts of the quality and beauty of cedar-wood, I resolved to put it to the test. I gave the branch into the hands of a skilful workman, who made me an ornamental piece of furniture out of a portion of it. He pronounced the wood to be of the first quality—"almost as hard as oak, with a grain as close as box." It takes a high finish, and the carving stands sharp and perfect. In appearance it does not differ much from pine; but its colour is deeper and richer. It retains its fragrance as fresh and strong as when first cut. Should any of my readers wish to see genuine cedar-wood from Lebanon, if they will favour me with a visit, I shall feel great pleasure in gratifying them.

THE TEMPLES OF LEBANON.

From the cedars I turned southward, following a path I had travelled before, and have described elsewhere. It was

now both difficult and dangerous, for the snow lay deep, and the summer streamlets were converted into foaming torrents.

On the second day I reached the fountain of the Adonis at Afka. It bursts from a cave at the foot of a stupendous cliff, and its foaming waters rush down into a wild chasm. The ruins of the Temple of Venus, built, tradition says, on the spot where Adonis fell, lie strewn over a little mound by the cave's mouth, and some of the massive stones and granite columns are now in the bottom of the torrent bed.

Hence I rode along the flank of Jebel Sunnin, which rose on my left, a spotless pyramid of snow. Passing the upper sources of the Nahr el-Kelb, and the chasm spanned by the natural bridge, I revisited the castle and temples of Fukra. One temple is in part hewn in the rock; another, simple, massive, and grand even in its desolation, is of the oldest type. These were doubtless shrines of Baal or Tammuz, built by the Giblites in remote ages.

Crossing another sublime glen, which sends a little tributary to the Dog River, I clambered up vine-clad slopes to the Greek Convent of Mar Elias, situated on the summit of a cliff commanding a wild and wide panorama of mountain and sea.

After a short stay I again mounted and proceeded to Bukfeiya, and received a hospitable welcome in the palace of the *Emir*, one of the hereditary princes of Lebanon. The site is charming. One would never weary looking down through the vista of the magnificent valley of the Dog River. The gardens, vineyards, fig and olive groves, that encircle the houses and clothe the steep slopes below, bear noble testimony to the fruitfulness of Lebanon. The peaks above the village rise so steeply, and bristle so with pointed rocks, that cultivation is impossible. Yet even there the brilliant foliage of the ilex, which springs out of every rent, contrasts beautifully with the white limestone; while away along the serried top of the ridge, where the sandstone crops out, are thickets of pines.

TEMPLE OF BAAL.

Deir el-Kulah is five miles south of Bukfeiya, but the road is so bad and tortuous that it took me nearly as many hours to reach it. The name signifies "the convent of the castle," and is descriptive, a convent having been built on the ruins of an old fortress. It stands on the crest of a narrow and lofty ridge, round whose base sweeps the wild glen of the Magoras. The stream is fifteen hundred feet below, winding out and in among dark foliage like a thread of silver. Eastward the eye wanders up the valley of Metn among villages, and vineyards, and mulberry groves, and pine forests, till it rests on the snowy peak of Kenîseh. North and south extend mountain sides, rich and rugged, far as the eye can see; and on the west the plain of Beyrout is at our feet, with its wastes of white sand on the one side, and its bright city embowered in verdure on the other; while beyond is the boundless expanse of the Mediterranean;—not quite boundless, however, for when the glow of sunset mantles the horizon, the hills of far-distant Cyprus, overtopped by classic Olympus, rise in clear outline.

The ruins at Deir el-Kulah include an ancient village, a castle or citadel, and a temple. The latter is the most interesting. It is one hundred and six feet long, and fifty-four broad. Its portico had a double range of columns, six feet in diameter; and some of the stones in the walls measure fourteen feet by five and a half. I saw, as others had seen before me, several Greek inscriptions. They are short and fragmentary, but fortunately long enough to throw light on the origin and object of the building. One contains a dedication to "Baal-markos, *Sovereign Lord of Sports*." Baal is often mentioned in the Bible. To him most of the "high places" in Palestine were dedicated. Among the Phœnicians he was the chief object of worship, and his worship was introduced into Israel by the infamous "*Jezebel*, daughter of *Eth-Baal*, king of the Sidonians" (1 Kings xvi. 31).

In the Bible this deity is called by the different names, *Baal berith*, "Lord of the Covenant" (Judges ix. 4); *Baal-zebub*, "Lord of flies" (2 Kings i. 2); and *Baal-peor* (Num. xxv. 1). So here we have a temple dedicated to *Baal-markos*, the "Lord of Sports." It was doubtless one of the great centres of Phœnician idolatry, where the kinsfolk and townsfolk of Jezebel joined in their lascivious rites.

From time immemorial Lebanon has been a grand centre of superstition and idolatry. Temples crowned almost every height, and sanctuaries were consecrated in almost every grove; "On every high hill, in all the tops of the mountains, and under every green tree, and under every thick oak, they did offer sweet savour to all their idols" (Ezek. vi. 13). Time has not changed it. Professing a different faith, and called by a different name, the religious spirit of its people remains the same. Their convents are now as numerous as their idol shrines ever were; and could the old Giblites and Phœnicians again revisit their country, they would find it hard to distinguish the saints and angels that deck the Christian altars from the images of their own deities.

From Deir el-Kulah I descended to Beyrout, having thus traversed nearly the whole Maronite section of Lebanon.

THE DRUSES AND THEIR MOUNTAIN HOME.

> "Fierce, hardy, proud, in conscious freedom bold,
> Those stormy seats the warrior Druses hold;
> From Norman blood their lofty line they trace,
> Their lion courage proves their generous race:
> They, only they, while all around them kneel
> In sullen homage to the Thracian steel,
> Teach their pale despots' waning moon to fear
> The patriot terrors of the mountain spear."

I have explored every interesting nook and corner in southern Lebanon, the home of the Druses. I shall here, however, give only a brief sketch of one short tour which led me through the cream of the country, and at the best season—the vintage.

I left Beyrout for Deir el-Kamr on a sunny afternoon, early in September. My only companion was my servant, a mountaineer, who knew every inch of the road as well as I did myself. The distance is five hours, and the path none of the best. The first hour is in the plain wading through deep sands under the shade of a pine forest, and then winding among mulberry gardens. There are more palms here than one is accustomed to see in Syria or Palestine—not in groves like Egypt, but singly and in clumps of three or four.

The foot of the mountain is reached and the ascent begins by a track, more like the rocky bed of a winter torrent, than a highway to the capital of Lebanon. But as we mount the ruggedness is forgotten, and we are enraptured with the variety, the richness, and the extent of the views. We miss here, however, the close and careful cultivation of the Maronite district. The vines are not so well trained, and here and there are long reaches of mountain side, where the old terraces are broken and the soil waste. The Druses are warriors rather than husbandmen. They delight in arms more than in vineyards. One notices this as soon as he enters their country. He reads it in their looks. The flashing eye, and haughty step, and calm demeanour, are not the characteristics of a son of toil. The trim beard, and spotless white turban, and long dagger proclaim the soldier rather than the peasant. Still the Druses are not wanting in industry, and were they under a wise rule much might be made of them.

The costume of the women in this part of Lebanon, Druses and Christians alike, is strange and striking. Here one sees at every fountain that most singular of all the singularities of female dress or ornament—the *tantûr*. It is a tube or horn, of gold or silver, from one to two feet long, and about two inches in diameter, tapering slightly. To the lower end are fastened a number of silver knobs by silken cords a yard in length. The horn is placed erect on

the top of the head, strapped round the chin, and balanced by the silver knobs which hang down the back. Over the whole is thrown a long veil of white muslin, which at the pleasure of the wearer is either permitted to descend in graceful folds behind, or is brought round so as to conceal both face and figure. Such is the ordinary costume of the matrons of Lebanon; and whatever may be said of its absurdity, there can be no doubt that it gives a grace and dignity to the carriage worthy of imitation in more favoured lands. The tantûr is the first requisite of the bride; for maidens are not permitted to wear it. Its origin is unknown, and it is very questionable whether it is to it the Psalmist alludes (lxxv. 4).

A DRUSE WEDDING.

On approaching the village of Ain 'Anûb we were somewhat startled by hearing dropping shots, and seeing troops of horsemen galloping hither and thither along the mountain side. We soon learned that it was the wedding of one of the hereditary Sheikhs; and I was invited to halt an hour and see the fete. I gladly consented.

The ordinary mode of procedure on the wedding day is this. Some Druse priests, accompanied by a few of the bridegroom's relatives, go to the bride's house, which, in this instance, was in a neighbouring village. After drawing up and reading the marriage contract, the bride, in her richest attire, and completely enveloped in a veil of white and gold, is placed on a horse covered with superb housings, and led off to her husband. A long train of relatives and friends, male and female, in holiday costume, follow her. When they get within half a mile or so of her husband's village, his friends and retainers—amounting in the present case to several hundreds—sally out, and a mock combat ensues. Both parties being armed, and well trained in mountain warfare, the scene becomes intensely exciting. From behind rocks and trees, from the tops of cliffs, from

every point of vantage, volleys of musketry — blank of course—are poured upon the advancing troop. The horsemen charge and retreat. Step by step the bridegroom's party retire, contesting every inch; and at length amid ringing cheers, and shrill cries of women, and salvos of musketry, the bride enters the village in triumph, and is hurried away to the harim. There she is left alone, still enveloped in her veil, to await her husband who has never yet seen her face. After some time he enters, respectfully lifts the veil, takes one look, immediately replaces it, and returns to his guests. The revels go on often for many days. . . . .

The sun had long set ere I entered Deir el-Kamr.

THE MASSACRE OF 1860.

Deir el-Kamr is, or rather was seven years ago, a beautiful little town of seven thousand souls, built high up on the side of a wild glen, and encompassed by terraced vineyards and orchards. The castle, occupied by a Turkish garrison, crowns a cliff; and on the opposite side of the glen stands the beautiful palace of the Emir Beshir, the former governor of Lebanon. The steep and richly wooded bank leading up to it, the commanding site, the vast mass of picturesque buildings, and the wooded hill behind, all remind one of the Castle of Heidelberg. For years the palace has been turned into a barrack; and the Turks are doing there what they have done everywhere;—they are fast reducing its splendid courts, and marble halls, and gilt saloons, to ruin.

Deir el-Kamr has suffered more from the hereditary strife of Druse and Maronite than any other place in Lebanon. Being an exclusively Christian town, in the centre of a Druse district, it has ever borne the first brunt of battle, and has repeatedly been burned to ashes. But the most fearful tragedy, even in its sad history, was enacted in 1860. At the commencement of the outbreak in that year, the town was taken and plundered by the Druses, who, after burning Zahleh, returned to complete the work of destruc-

tion. The unfortunate inhabitants resolved to defend their lives to the last, for they knew too well the fate that awaited them. The rest of the sad tale I shall give in the words of one who was all but an eye-witness.* "The Turkish governor, who had four hundred troops in the castle, while at Bteddin, half a mile off, there were three hundred more, told the people they had nothing to fear if they would give him up their arms; and he insisted on their doing so. They applied for an escort to Beyrout; this he would in no wise permit. Their valuables he made them place in the castle, and then ordered a great part of the population there. So men, women, and children were all crowded together in the palace, under his protection, on the night of the 20th. On the morning of the 21st, the Druses collected round the town; one of their leaders came to the palace and desired to speak with the governor. A conversation was carried on in a low voice. . . . . At last a question was asked to which the governor gave the answer, *Hepsi*, that is, 'all.' Hereupon the Druse disappeared, but in a few minutes the gate was thrown open, and in rushed the fiends, cutting down and slaughtering every male; the soldiers co-operating!"

Twelve hundred men were massacred on that fatal day!

SOUTHERN LEBANON.

At six o'clock I was again in the saddle, and in an hour drew up upon the brow of Wady Barûk, four miles south of Deir el-Kamr, and one of the richest and wildest glens in Lebanon. High up on its southern bank stands the village of Mukhtara, and the palace of the late Said Bey, the Chief of the Druses. It is a building of great size, occupying a splendid site; but with no pretensions to architectural beauty. After a hurried visit to the Bey, whom I had known before, and who now insisted on sending a couple of horsemen with me, I continued my journey.

* Cyril C. Graham, Esq.



Our path lay along the terraced mountain side, often beneath the spreading branches of fragrant walnuts. We looked down into the lovely valley of Barûk, and away over a wooded ridge beyond it to the Mediterranean. Village after village was passed, and vineyard after vineyard. Ever and anon boys and girls came rushing out with bunches of luscious grapes that would have done honour to the vines of Eschol, and prayed the Bey to accept their offering.

Leaving the vale of Barûk we struck up Wady Jezzîn; and passing a large village of that name, we ascended through a bleak and rugged region to the southern brow of Lebanon. The scene which here suddenly burst upon our view was magnificent. Four thousand feet and more beneath where we stood, was the deep chasm of the Leontes, which intersects the range, carrying the waters of Cœle-Syria to the Mediterranean. Over it frowned the massive battlements of the Castle of Shukîf, founded by the Phœnicians to guard the road to their agricultural colony at Laish. On the east rose Hermon, its icy crown gleaming in the ruddy sunshine. At its base were the plains of Ijon (1 Kings xv. 20), and Dan (Judges xviii. 7–10), extending in green meadows to the Waters of Merom (Josh xi. 5). On the south lay the picturesque mountain chain of Naphtali, over which appeared on the horizon the pale blue hills of Samaria. And away on the right was the wavy coast line running along from the shattered battlements of Tyre to the distant Cape of Carmel. In fact the whole northern division of Palestine was before my eyes, every feature brought out in bold relief by the evening sun. It was one of those pictures which time can never efface from memory.

The descent to the banks of the Leontes was long and toilsome. Crossing the stream by the old bridge of Burghos, we attempted to reach a small village near it, where we intended to pass the night; but we lost our way, and were obliged to halt under a large oak-tree. Tying my

horse to a branch, I wrapped my cloak around me and was soon asleep. My companions followed my example; and next day we proceeded to Rasheiya, whence I went to Damascus. Thus terminated my tour in Southern Lebanon.



II.

Hamath and the Northern Border of Israel.

"This shall be your north border. From the Great Sea ye shall point out for you Mount Hor: from Mount Hor ye shall point out unto the entrance of Hamath; and the goings forth of the border shall be to Zedad: and the border shall go on to Ziphron, and the goings out of it shall be at Hazar-enan: This shall be your north border."—NUM. xxxiv. 7-9.

"FROM Dan to Beersheba" was in olden days the popular expression for "all Palestine." "The throne of David was set over Israel from Dan even to Beersheba" (2 Sam. iii. 10); "The king said to Joab, Go now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba, and number the people, that I may know the number of the people" (xxiv. 2). The phrase has become a world's proverb; and yet I have reason to believe that it is often misunderstood by Biblical students; and I know that it formed the basis of one of the grossest blunders in Bishop Colenso's unfortunate book—that in which he compares the numbers of the Israelites with the extent of Canaan."*

Dan and Beersheba were the northern and southern limits of the country allotted to the twelve tribes by Joshua, and actually possessed by them. Two other land-marks are also mentioned by the sacred historian. "So Joshua took all that land. . . . . from the *mount Halak* that goeth up to Seir, even unto *Baal-gad* in the valley of Lebanon under mount Hermon" (Josh. xi. 17); and again, "These are the

* *Pentateuch*, Part I. p. 82.

kings which Israel smote . . . from Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon even unto mount Halak that goeth up to Seir, which Joshua gave unto the tribes of Israel for a possession" (xii. 7). Mount Halak was in the parallel of Beersheba, and Baal-gad is identical with Banias, four miles east of Dan. These then were the limits of what we may call "the land of possession." "The land of promise" was much larger. Its boundaries are defined in the words of the Lord to Abraham:—"In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abraham, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, *from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates*" (Gen. xv. 18). The promise was renewed to Israel in the desert,—"I will set thy bounds from the Red Sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, *and from the desert* (of Sinai) *unto the river*" (Euphrates). This wide territory, extending from Egypt on the south to the banks of the Euphrates on the north, was promised upon conditions; the people were on their part to be faithful and obedient to their God,—"If thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak, then . . . mine angel shall go before thee and bring thee," &c. (Exod. xxiii. 22–31). Israel did not fulfil the conditions, and, therefore, the whole land was not given to them; "And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he said, *Because* that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice, *I also will not henceforth drive out from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died*," &c. (Judges ii. 20–23; compare Josh. xxiii. 13–16).

These facts were unknown to Bishop Colenso; or, if known, they were unfairly overlooked, and hence the force of one of his most telling but most sophistical objections to the truth of the Divine Record.

Before the death of Moses a distinct revelation was given to him of the boundaries of the country which Israel was to occupy. It is a singular fact that these were different both

from those in the Abrahamic covenant, and those of "the land of possession." On the south the border line reached from Kadesh to the river of Egypt (Num. xxxiv. 4, 5); while on the north it is thus described:—"This shall be your north border; from the Great Sea ye shall point out for you Mount Hor; from Mount Hor ye shall point out unto the entrance of Hamath; and the goings forth of the border shall be to Zedad; and the border shall go on to Ziphron, and the goings out of it shall be at Hazar-enan" (verses 7–9). Dan, as has been stated, was the northern limit of "the land of possession." Hamath is one hundred and twenty miles north of Dan. The ranges of Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon, the valley of Cœle-Syria, and the plain of Hamath, lie between them. This fact explains Joshua xiii. After the division of the country "from Dan to Beersheba" among the tribes by Joshua, a large part of the territory promised to Moses still remained, and is minutely described. The section lying on the north is as follows: "The land of the Giblites, and all Lebanon toward the sunrising (Anti-Lebanon), from Baal-gad under Mount Hermon, unto the entering into Hamath; all the inhabitants of the hill country from Lebanon unto Misrepothmaim, and all the Sidonians" (verses 5, 6).

It will thus be seen that the country given in covenant to Abraham extended from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates; that promised to Moses extended from the river of Egypt to the entrance of Hamath; while the phrase "from Dan to Beersheba" only embraced the territory actually divided by Joshua among the tribes.

"A land of promise" is still in store for the ancient people of God. Ezekiel in prophetic vision gives its boundaries, which correspond at all points except the east with those of Moses. It is only with the north I have to do at present; and Ezekiel defines it as follows:—"This shall be the border of the land toward the north side, from the Great Sea, the way of Hethlon, as men go to Zedad; Hamath, Be-

rothah, Sibraim, which is between the border of Damascus and the border of Hamath; Hazor-hatticon, which is by the coast of Hauran. And the border from the sea shall be Hazar-enan" (xlvii. 15–17).

These northern marches do not lie in the usual route of travellers. Comparatively little has been written about them. Yet among them were laid the scenes of some of the most tragic events of Jewish history. In addition to holy and historic interests, therefore, a visit to the leading places may have the charm of novelty.

HAMATH.

Hamath is a quaint old city. If one could fancy Pompeii restored and repeopled with the men and women whose mouldering bones are now being dug up from its ruins, it would not present a greater contrast to the modern cities of the west than Hamath. For thirty centuries or more, life has been at a stand-still there. Everything is patriarchal—costume, manners, salutations, occupations. The venerable elders, who, with turbaned heads, flowing beards, and flowing robes, sit daily in the gates, might pass for the elders of the children of Heth who bargained with Abraham in the gates of Kirjath-arba; and the Arab sheikhs, who ever and anon pass in and out, armed with sword and spear, are no unworthy representatives of the fiery Ishmael. There is no town in the world in which primeval life can be seen in such purity as in Hamath. The people glory in it. No greater insult could be offered to them than to contrast Hamath with the cities of the infidel.

The site of Hamath is picturesque. It stands in the deep glen of the Orontes, whose broad rapid stream divides it through the centre. The banks are lined with poplars, and the queer houses rise like terraces along the steep slopes. Four bridges span the stream, and connect the two quarters of the city. The remains of antiquity are nearly all gone; the citadel is a vast mound of rubbish; the mosques are

falling to ruin; and the private houses, though in a few cases splendidly decorated within, are shapeless piles of mud and timber.

But the great curiosities of Hamath are its Persian wheels, numbers of which are ranged along the river side, turned by the current, and raise water to supply the mosques, houses, and gardens. Like everything else, they are old and crazy; and as they turn lazily round they creak, and groan, now in deep bass, now in shrill treble, and now in horrid concert of jarring sounds. In the still summer evening when the shadows fall upon the river banks, hiding the rippling water and the labouring wheels, and when silence reigns over the streets and houses of the old city, these strange sounds swell up from the gathering gloom, and echo through the valley, as if the spirits of evil had broken from their prison-house and were filling the air with shriek and wail.

Hamath takes rank among the oldest cities of the world, having been founded by the youngest son of Canaan, some four thousand years ago (Gen. x. 18). It was already the capital of a kingdom at the Exodus. During the warlike rule of David it was forced to yield allegiance to Israel (2 Sam. viii. 9); but at a later period Hamath had attained to such power that Amos distinguished it by the name "great" (vi. 2); and the Assyrian monarch spoke of its conquest as among the most celebrated of his achievements (2 Kings xviii. 34). When the kingdom of the Seleucidae was established in northern Syria the name Hamath was changed to Epiphania, in honour of Antiochus Epiphanes, but on the overthrow of Greek power the Greek name disappeared; and we have to this day the old Hebrew appellation retained in its Arabic form *Hamah*.

Hamah has still thirty thousand inhabitants. It has for many centuries been the residence of a remnant of the old Mohammedan aristocracy — a race now distinguished for poverty, pride, and fanaticism. They are the determined enemies of all change alike in religion, literature, art, and

social life. The age of Mohammed is their golden age; and the literature of the Koran the only literature worthy of the name. Wherever one meets with or sees them strutting through the dingy streets, sitting in the gates, or at their devotions in the mosque, he is immediately reminded of the Pharisee's prayer, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are."

I once met a distinguished member of this proud race at the house of a learned and liberal Moslem friend in Damascus. The conversation turned on the progress of art and science in Western Europe. Railways, steam-engines, printing-presses, the electric telegraph, and many other triumphs of modern discovery, were spoken of. He listened with perfect calmness and indifference; and as he haughtily stroked his beard he now and again muttered a few words, among which I could detect the not very complimentary *kâferîn* ("infidels"). A beautiful copy of the Koran, a gem of the Leipzig press, was put into his hand. He opened it. "It is printed," he exclaimed, throwing it from him and wiping his fingers as if the very touch was pollution.

I drew his attention to the comparative state of England and the East, both in ancient and modern times. I showed him that there must be something wrong in the latter—some grievous defect in its government, and in its faith—when such a fatal check was put upon the advance of art and civilization. His reply was singularly characteristic of the state of feeling among all orthodox Mohammedans. It explains also, as I believe, the true source of Turkish misrule, "The Franks," said he, "possess the wisdom and the power of *janns* (evil spirits); but Allah has reserved for us alone the true religion. *Lillâh el-mejd*, glory be to God!"

THE LAND OF HAMATH.

Emerging from the glen, in which the city stands, we find ourselves in an open undulating plain, bleak and bare. A patch of grain here, a shepherd and his flock yonder, and

a party of Arab horsemen hovering on the horizon, are the only objects that break the monotony of the dreary ride across it. The little excitement of danger one almost feels to be a relief here. Shade there is none, and green grass, except it happen to be the spring season, is nowhere seen. The Orontes is hid in its deep bed some miles to the eastward.

Three hours sharp riding along the line of an old Roman highway brings us again to the brow of a ravine, and looking down the steep, rugged bank, we see the yellow river shooting along far below, between rows of willows that stoop to kiss its murmuring waters. A bridge of ten arches, and bearing the marks of Roman, Saracen, and Turkish architects, spans the channel. Crossing it and clambering up the southern bank, we stand amid the ruins of Arethusa, an ancient episcopal city. Traces of walls, and gates, and streets, and churches, and fields surrounding them are here, all now ruined and forsaken.

After wandering for a time among the ruins I discovered a poor gipsy crouching in terror beneath a shattered wall. He was the only living being in Arethusa, and his tale was sad enough. The day before he was rich and happy, the head of a numerous family and of an attached tribe. Now he was alone, and a beggar. The tents of his people had been pitched on the banks of the Orontes; their camels and goats were feeding on the plain. A troop of Anezeh came suddenly upon them and swept them all away, camels, goats, tents, women, children. He with his two sons escaped by plunging into the river and swimming across. His sons were on the track of the plunderers, and he was lurking here in the hope of being able during the night to effect the release of his family, and perhaps also to recover his flocks or a sufficient equivalent. Property is as insecure still on the borders of the Arabian desert as it was in the days of Job (Job i. 14, 15).

About three miles east of Arethusa is the little village of

Zifrûn, probably identical with *Ziphron*, which Moses mentions as one of the border cities of "the promised land" (Num. xxxiv. 9).

I was anxious to visit the village, so as to make a full survey of the northern "marches;" but the Anezeh were reported to be encamped near it, and the whole plain was scoured by their horsemen. My servants and guide refused to accompany me. They even refused to travel to Hums by the east bank of the river, for they said the Arabs would see and plunder us. There is a path along the west bank, but it is very long and very bad, and I determined not to take it whatever might happen. Seeing that arguments were vain, and that the sun was getting low, I spurred my horse and dashed away along the direct route. My servants reluctantly followed. We met only two Anezeh cavaliers, and they thought it prudent to let us pass. The muezzin was calling the "faithful" to evening prayers when we entered the gate of Emesa.

EMESA.

The Arab *Hums*, and Roman *Emesa*, has little of historical or antiquarian interest to attract the traveller. It is a clean, compact, bustling town of twenty thousand inhabitants, surrounded by old walls barely sufficient to repel a sudden foray of Bedawîn. It was celebrated in classic times for a magnificent temple dedicated to the Syrian sun-god, whose priests were princes of the land. One of them became Roman emperor, and is usually called by the name of his deity, *Elagabalus*. Emesa was unknown in history before the days of Strabo; but it is just possible that it may be identical with the Biblical *Zobah*, which was situated between Hamath and Damascus (1 Kings xi. 23; 1 Chron. xviii. 3), and which King David conquered when endeavouring to gain for Israel the whole land embraced in the Abrahamic covenant. Such I take to be the meaning of 2 Sam. viii. 3; "David smote also Hadadezer, son of Rehob,

king of Zobah, *as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates*" (compare Gen. xv. 10).

Not a vestige of Roman Emesa is now visible except a few marble and granite columns scattered about the streets, and built up in the modern walls. The mound on which the citadel, and probably also the temple, once stood, is like an immense rubbish heap, and reminds one of the mounds of Nineveh and Babylon. Like them it might richly repay the labour of excavation. There are many other similar mounds on the neighbouring plain. This measures a quarter of a mile in circuit and upwards of a hundred feet in height. From its summit I got a most commanding view of the "land of Hamath." It is a vast plain, stretching on the east and north to the horizon, and shut in on the south and west by mountain ridges. It embraces a circuit not less than fifty miles in diameter; and through it from north to south winds the Orontes. A short distance west of Emesa is Bahr Kades, a lake eight miles long, partly, if not entirely, artificial, formed by a great dam drawn across the bed of the river. The water thus raised is conducted by canals to the gardens and orchards of the town.

What a noble plain must this have been in the days of Syria's prosperity! Teeming with an industrious population; studded with towns and villages whose sites are now marked by shapeless mounds. A rich soil, abundant water, a genial clime;—"all the gifts that heaven and earth impart" are here. But they are all wasted. The land of Hamath is desolate; the cities of Zobah are forsaken.

"THE ENTRANCE OF HAMATH."

Standing on the top of the ruined citadel, I saw on the western side of the plain a great opening or pass through the mountains. On its southern side the ridge of Lebanon rises abruptly to a height of ten thousand feet; and on its northern, the lower ridge of Bargylus terminates in a bluff promontory. Between the two lies the only opening from

the land of Hamath to the coast of the Mediterranean. This is unquestionably "the entrance of Hamath," mentioned repeatedly by the sacred writers as one of the landmarks on the northern border. "This," said Moses, "shall be your north border. *From the great sea* ye shall point out for you Mount Hor. From Mount Hor ye shall point out your border unto *the entrance of Hamath*" (Num. xxxiv. 7, 8).

Afterwards, both went sailing along the Syrian coast, and when standing on the plain of Phœnicia, I saw, with still more distinctness, this remarkable pass. I saw then how graphic was the description of Moses. He states that the western border of the land was "the great sea." Then he adds, "From the great sea (the Mediterranean) ye shall point out for you *Mount Hor*." The Hebrew is *Hor-ha-har*, "the mountain of the mountain;" that is, emphatically, "the great mountain." It was there before me—the majestic northern peak of Lebanon, the loftiest mountain in Syria; its glittering crown encircled by a halo of silvery clouds.

"From Mount Hor ye shall point out your border unto *the entrance of Hamath*," that is, "*the* entrance" from the great sea. There is but one, and it cannot be mistaken. That pass between Lebanon and Bargylus is the only opening from the coast into the land of Hamath. I have been told that to this day it is called by the people of Tripoly *Bab Hamah*, "the door of Hamath."

From "the entrance" the border line was drawn north-east toward the city of Hamath; then south-east by Ziphron, Zedad, and Hazar-enan (Num. xxxiv. 8, 9). Ziphron we have already seen in the distance; and we shall now visit the other two.

A NIGHT MARCH TO ZEDAD.

During one of my visits to Emesa I met with a Jacobite priest from the "desert village" of Sudud, the ancient Zedad. I felt a deep interest in him and his flock. The Su-

dudîyeh are all members of the Jacobite Church, and constitute the only remnant of that ancient sect in Syria. They are poor and oppressed, but industrious and brave. In their desert home they live in comparative comfort, notwithstanding the tyranny of the Turks, the exactions of the Bedawîn, and what is sometimes more severely felt than either, the unceasing enmity of the whole body of their fellow-Christians. It is unfortunately the case that the various Christian sects in Syria hate each other with a bitter hatred, and often use their influence with Turkish rulers to oppress and spoil their brethren. The Jacobites of Sudud had suffered much in this way; and it had been my good fortune to secure for them relief from cruel wrong. They were now profuse in their expressions of gratitude. In the name of his people the priest gave me a pressing invitation to Sudud, and I gladly accepted it.

Zedad lies eight hours south-east of Emesa, across an open, desolate plain. We left the city a little before sunset, on a beautiful evening in autumn. The air was fresh and balmy; but after five long months of cloudless sky and burning sunshine, no wonder "the heaven seemed as brass and the earth as iron." I found my friend the priest and some ten or twelve of his people, mounted on mules and donkeys, waiting for us outside the gate. I was struck with the venerable and even noble appearance of the old man; and I thought he might be regarded as no unworthy representative, so far at least as outward aspect was concerned, of the Syrian *episcopoi* in primitive times. His eye was bright, his cheek bronzed, and his flowing beard white as the snow-drift. He wore a black, high-crowned, circular cap; a close under garment of crimson satin, bound round the waist by a girdle; and over all was thrown a long loose robe of black serge. He rode a stout mule, whose well-padded saddle and housings were ornamented with numerous red and black tassels, cowries, and silver charms.

A ride of an hour and a half brought us to Meskineh, a

little hamlet occupied by a colony from Sudud, and forming one of the outposts of habitation on the plain of Emesa. Here we halted to await the formation of the caravan and the light of the moon. The road from Emesa to Sudud is very dangerous during the autumn. The Anezeh and Beni-Shemâl are then encamped around the fountains of Kuryetein and Salemîyeh, away to the eastward; and their horsemen scour the plain up to the very gates of the city, stripping stray travellers, plundering caravans, and driving off flocks and herds. The priest told me that they have spies in Emesa, and mounted scouts along the leading roads, who give due notice to the tribe of every favourable opportunity for plunder. The poor villagers suffer severely. Their convoys of grain are closely watched, and not unfrequently the hard-earned gatherings of a whole year are carried off in one raid.

"And does not the government protect you?" I asked.

"The government!" he exclaimed with surprise; "the government does nothing but collect its taxes!"

How true was the picture which the old prophets drew of Syria's future! "The spoilers are come upon all high places through the wilderness: for the sword of the Lord shall devour *from the one end of the land even to the other end of the land:* no flesh shall have peace. They have sown wheat, but shall reap thorns; they have put themselves to pain, but shall not profit; and they shall be ashamed of your revenues, because of the fierce anger of the Lord" (Jer. xii. 12, 13). "They shall eat their bread with carefulness, and drink their water with astonishment, that her land may be desolate from all that is therein, *because of the violence of all them that dwell therein*" (Ezek. xii. 19).

When the moon rose the order was given to march. The caravan was much larger than I expected. There were about sixty Sududîyeh, all armed with guns, besides a dozen or two of traders from Emesa and Hamath; and the animals—camels, mules, and donkeys—may probably have

numbered two hundred. The priest, and the sheikh of Sudud who rode a good horse, took the lead, and asked me to join them, after giving strict orders to all strangers, as they valued their safety, not to leave the main body for a single instant, and not to speak above a whisper.

On we sped. Our pace was somewhat slow, but steady. Not a voice was heard, and the only sound the ear could detect was the dull muffled tread of men and animals on the dusty soil. The pale moon shed her silvery light on the grey plain, half revealing, half concealing; and the long compact body of men and animals, stealing noiselessly over the bleak waste, had a strange spectral look that almost alarmed one.

The country was at first perfectly flat; but after travelling some hours it became more and more undulating, and broken by wadys and dry torrent beds. Into one of these we descended, and marched for a mile or more. I saw that the sheikh was now all anxiety and watchfulness; and that my reverend friend, who for a time had been nodding on his careful mule, roused himself and addressed a few words to the chief. I concluded that this was a dangerous part of the road, and my thoughts were soon rather unpleasantly realized.

The sheikh after the words of the priest trotted ahead, and was soon out of sight. We went on as before; but, as I thought, somewhat slower. The sheikh had not been absent more than fifteen minutes when he came back at a canter, and, pushing on to the very centre of the caravan, cried in a deep earnest whisper, "*Hauwelu!*" (halt). The caravan stopped in a moment. So still and statue-like did the whole become, that one could have imagined his voice had turned them to stone. A moment more and I saw that every gun was unslung, and that the leading men gathered round their chief. Galloping up to the group, I demanded what was wrong. "*Arabs,*" was the reply, and it was enough to explain all.

The sheikh, who was well mounted, unslung his rifle, examined the priming of his pistols, and told his people to remain steady and quiet while he went forward to reconnoitre. I joined him. After riding a quarter of a mile or so we came to a sharp turn in the valley, where it appeared to open into an undulating plateau. Here we stopped, and my companion, touching my arm, pointed to a rising ground in the distance on the left, and said, "*Shùf.*"

"Those are trees," I said; but that instant my horse, with the true instinct of his race, pricked up his ears, raised his head, and gave a low angry snort.

"They must be Arabs, and mounted," I now added.

"Your horse tells you that."

"Can we not get nearer them?" I asked.

"No. If we advance a yard beyond this rock their sharp eyes will detect us. The Arab has the eye of the eagle when on a foray."

I had fortunately my double field glass slung at my side. Taking it out and turning it on the party I saw them distinctly, and, greatly to the surprise of my companion, told him their numbers and equipments in a moment.

"There are seven horsemen armed with spears. They are advancing slowly this way in line.

"Are there only seven? Can you make out no more?" were the eager questions of my companion.

"None; not another man," I replied, as I examined them closely again with the glass. "But stay—what is yon on the crest of that rising ground away further to the right? More Arabs, as I live! A large body—some on horseback, some on dromedaries. I see their spears glittering in the moonlight."

"What's their number?" demanded the sheikh.

"Forty at least; and each dromedary carries two.. I see their outline distinctly against the clear sky."

"It is a *ghuzu* of the Beni-Shemâl," said the sheikh, sadly and bitterly. "God help my poor people; we are all lost!"

"May we not escape yet?" I replied. "See, the main body is going southward, and must cross the valley at least half a mile ahead. If your people keep quiet they cannot be seen in the valley."

"True. But these—look at these," the sheikh said, pointing to the Arabs we had first seen, and who still continued slowly to advance, "will not they discover us?"

I turned my glass upon them, and then said: "They are coming down straight upon us. Come in closer or they will see you, for they are evidently keeping a sharp look out."

At the place where we stood a jagged limestone rock, some eight or ten feet high, projected from the northern bank. The side next to us was deeply excavated, and formed a kind of natural cave. Round it the valley turned at a sharp angle. We were thus completely hidden from all in front, while about a hundred yards behind us was another bluff, and a slight curve in the glen, serving in a great measure to conceal the caravan even from us. The danger that threatened, and the critical nature of our position, made me examine minutely every feature of the glen. I now saw that from the main body we had nothing to fear; and should the others pass in front of the rock we had every chance to escape their notice also; but should they come round it nothing could save us.

"Go you back to your people," I said to my companion, "keep them close and perfectly still. I shall remain here to watch the Arabs. If they pass this rock, or in any other way discover the caravan, you may rely on me either to be with you or give you due warning. Meantime, have your men prepared: and should the worst come you have sixty muskets."

He was off in an instant. I then dismounted, and drew my horse close in under the projecting ledge. Through a rent I had command of the advancing party and the whole plateau. The Arabs came straight towards me. Already

I could hear their voices. They were splendidly mounted. When about to descend into the glen they turned to the left to avoid the steep bank and some broken ledges. "We are safe!" I inwardly exclaimed. The nearest of them was not more than twenty yards distant, and just as he reached the bottom his horse suddenly started and neighed. My horse was about to reply, when by a check of the bridle I silenced him; and the wise creature seemed to know my danger. The whole party halted. "What's here?" they cried, and they looked all round. The man next me wheeled round and advanced. It was an anxious and a critical moment. The lives of many seemed now to hang upon a thread. The Arab was on one side of the rock, and I on the other. I saw the point of his long tufted spear a few feet above me; but I could not see the man, as I dared not raise my head. Should he move forward another yard, or should my horse make the slightest motion, we were lost. With my foot in the stirrup, and my hand on the horse's neck, I stood like a statue, prepared, should he pass the rock, to make a bold dash forward, which I knew would drive him back to his companions. I can never forget that moment of suspense. It was soon over. I heard a call from his companions, then the ring of his horse's feet on the stones in the dry torrent bed. I put up my head again, and saw the whole party ascend the south bank, and in five minutes they were out of sight. I mounted and followed cautiously, and had the intense satisfaction of seeing them and their friends ride off at a quickened pace away across the desert.

After half an hour's halt the caravan again started, and we reached Sudud just as the first dawn of morning appeared in the east. So ended my night march. I have described it here for a twofold purpose:—to serve as an illustration of modern life on the borders of the Syrian desert; and to show how true was the Bible picture of the Ishmaelite, "His hand will be against every man;" and

how true the predictions of the disturbed state of Palestine, "No flesh shall have peace."

ZEDAD.

Sudud is still a large village; though it does not contain a single vestige of antiquity except a few fragments of columns built up in the mud walls of the modern houses. It is surrounded by gardens and cultivated fields, irrigated by a stream from one of those strange subterranean aqueducts, which one sees so frequently on the plain of Damascus. The people are all Christians; and though their ecclesiastical language is Syriac, they speak and understand Arabic alone. The priests showed me some old Syriac manuscripts, one or two of which were on vellum; but they were poorly written, and of no literary value.

The name of Zedad has not been once mentioned in history since that time when Moses defined so minutely the northern border of Palestine. How strange to find the city still here, after an interval of more than three thousand years, with its name little changed!

HAZAR-ENAN.

"The goings out of it (the border) shall be at *Hazar-enan.*" This Hazar-enan, or, as the word signifies, "Village of Fountains," stood, therefore, at the north-west corner of the promised land; and consequently east or south-east of Sudud. Three hours south-east of Sudud is *Hawarin*, a small village with some ancient ruins. The name might possibly be a corruption of Hazar-enan; but there is no fountain there, as I am told, for I did not visit it, and this fact appears fatal to the identity.

In my way back from Palmyra to Damascus I arrived on the evening of the second day at the large village of *Kuryetein*, which stands in the centre of that long valley described below as running westward from the desert city. It is twenty-two hours march from Palmyra, about the

same from Damascus, and six south-east from Sudud. Here are copious fountains,—the only ones of any note in the whole of that vast arid region. The Hebrew word *Hazar-enan* signifies, as I have said, "Village of Fountains;" and the Arabic word *Kuryetein*, "two villages." The ruins scattered among the lanes and gardens show that Kuryetein was once a place of importance; and the name, in conjunction with the old massive church, enables us to identify it with the Greek episcopal city of *Koradea*.

Ever since my visit I have been convinced that this is the long-lost Hazar-enan mentioned by Moses as the north-eastern landmark of Israel (Num. xxxiv. 9); and by Ezekiel as lying between the borders of Hamath and Damascus (xlvii. 17; xlviii. 1). If this be so, the northern border line is now fully ascertained.

Ezekiel's border is so far identical with that of Moses, but from this point it varies; Ezekiel includes the kingdom of Damascus; Moses excludes it; and therefore Moses draws his line westward from Hazar-enan to Riblah, and then south through Cœle-Syria to the Jordan. *Shaphan*, the next point after Hazar, is unknown; but we must pay a visit to Riblah.

RIBLAH.

My first visit to Riblah I have elsewhere described;* my second dates some three years later.

Leaving Sudud with the dawn, accompanied only by my two servants and a guide, I crossed the dreary plain to Hasya (three hours). It was rather a hazardous ride, especially after the experience of the "night march." We arrived in safety, however, greatly to the surprise of my good friend the Aga of Hasya, who assured me the Bedawîn were keeping the whole country in commotion, and had made the main road to Damascus impassable.

After two hours rest, and a substantial breakfast in the

* "Five Years in Damascus" vol. ii.

Aga's hospitable castle, I mounted again and set out for Riblah. My route still lay in the plain; but the northern slopes of Anti-Lebanon now rose up, bare and stern, close upon my left. In an hour I passed through a gap which intersects the ridge near its termination; and then another hour's gallop brought me to Riblah.

Riblah retains its ancient name, though scarce a fragment of the ancient city is visible. Its houses are poor and mean, but the site is splendid. The Orontes flows past, a deep lazy river; and a plain of unrivalled fertility stretches away for miles on each side. Has my reader ever remarked the accuracy of Biblical topography even in the minutest details? Moses speaks of "*Riblah on the east side of Ain;*" or of "the fountain," as the Hebrew signifies. Ten miles west of Riblah is the great fountain of the Orontes, which I also visited, and which is to this day called by all the people in the neighbourhood *el-Ain*, "the fountain."

After the battle of Megiddo, fatal to good King Josiah, Pharaoh-necho, continuing his march toward Assyria, encamped at Riblah, and here settled the succession in the Jewish monarchy by putting Eliakim on the throne (2 Kings xxiii. 29–34). Here also, on this noble plain, Nebuchadnezzar appears to have remained in camp while his general besieged and took Jerusalem. To this place the Jewish monarch was brought a captive, and his eyes put out immediately after witnessing the cruel murder of his sons (2 Kings xxv. 1–7).

On the blood-stained site I sat, and read from my Bible the few incidents of Riblah's history; and then looking upon the wretched village, and out over the rich but desolate plain, I could not but see that a curse was there, and I could not but feel that it was deserved.

Other thoughts, sad and solemn, were also forced upon my mind by the scenes around me. The whole Land was God's gift to his people. He gave it in covenant to Abraham; he gave it in promise to Moses; he divided it in part

to the tribes under Joshua; and he gave it in all its length and breadth,—"from the river of Egypt even unto the great river, the river Euphrates,"—to the nation under David. But the people forgot the Lord's goodness, and they rebelled against his authority, so that by their own deliberate acts they brought upon themselves and upon their land the threatened curse. Now upon the northern border, as before upon the eastern, the southern, and the western, with my own eyes I witnessed the literal fulfilment of the prophetic curse,—"I will bring the land into desolation: and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it. And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste. Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies' land" (Lev. xxvi. 32–34).



III.

Palmyra.

"And Solomon built Tadmor in the wilderness."—2 CHRON. viii. 4.

"Yet I could weep—for thou art lying, alas!
Low in the dust; and we admire thee now
As we admire the beautiful in death."

IN the year 1691 a company of English merchants resident in Aleppo, heard strange reports of the ruins of a magnificent city away in the centre of the Syrian desert. The reports reached them from various sources;—from Baghdad traders, who had traversed the desert with their caravans from native pedlars and armourers who followed the footsteps of the wandering Bedawîn; from Arab sheikhs who ruled the tribes and led the raids of the Anezeh and Beni Shemâl. One and all told the story of the great city. Such palaces and temples, such ranges of columns and heaps of ruins, such tombs and castles, such multitudes of inscriptions, and statues, and monuments the world had never seen as were there, grouped around the fountains, and scattered over the desolate plain of Tadmor. The glowing descriptions were like a romance from Antar or a tale from the Arabian Nights.

"The ground,
League beyond league, like one great cemetery
Is covered o'er with mouldering monuments:
And, let the living wander where they will,
They cannot leave the footsteps of the dead."

Making every allowance for Oriental exaggeration, and the

magic influence of Eastern fancy, the merchants thought there must be some foundation of fact—enough, at least, to repay the toil and expense of an expedition. It was a serious matter in those days to penetrate the desert; it is a work of some difficulty and danger even yet. But an expedition was organized; guides and guards were hired; the pathless waste was traversed; and the adventurous travellers were richly repaid by the discovery of the long lost ruins of "*Tadmor in the wilderness*," the city founded by Solomon and ruled by Zenobia. In a few months all Europe resounded with the story of their adventures, and the glowing descriptions of the desert city.

For more than half a century the interesting narrative of the Aleppo merchants was read with a kind of semi-scepticism. The leading facts were not questioned. None went so far as to doubt that the classic *Palmyra* had been discovered; but it was generally thought that the descriptions of the ruins were highly coloured, and that when other travellers would explore and describe them, uninfluenced by the excitement of a great discovery, by those feelings of romance which sometimes encircle as a halo the minds of antiquarian and geographical pioneers, the real, matter-of-fact, character and state of the ancient city would become known.

In the year 1751 another celebrated expedition reached Palmyra. It was well organized, fully equipped, and the objects it aimed at were successfully accomplished. The expedition was planned and carried out by men who, from their great learning, classic tastes, and previous travels in Italy, Greece, and Asia Minor, were in every respect qualified satisfactorily to explore, delineate, and describe the city. They were supplied with the best books and instruments, and accompanied by an accomplished architect and draughtsman. They spent two weeks surveying, measuring, sketching, drawing plans, and copying inscriptions; and they returned across the desert with full portfolios, and a caravan of camels laden with marbles and works of art.

The splendid folio which they afterwards published* will give such as have not visited the city the best idea of its wonderful remains. This great work showed European scholars that the narrative of the Aleppo merchants, instead of being exaggerated, fell short of the truth. In describing the ruins of Palmyra it would be almost impossible to exaggerate. There is nothing like them in the world. The sight of them from the adjoining hill top is like a dream of fairy land. True, there are in Athens and other cities of Greece single buildings chaster in style, and more perfect in execution, than any of which Palmyra can boast; there are also in Egypt and Syria structures of more colossal magnitude; but in no other spot in the world can we find such vast numbers of temples, palaces, colonnades, tombs, and monuments, grouped together so as to be seen at a single glance. Here is the testimony of Wood and Dawkins, the leaders of the expedition of which I have just spoken, given after traversing the whole circuit of lands classic and sacred:—"We had scarce passed these venerable monuments when the hills opening discovered to us, all at once, *the greatest quantity of ruins we had ever seen*, all of white marble, and beyond them towards the Euphrates a flat waste as far as the eye could reach, without any object which showed either life or motion. It is scarce possible to imagine anything more striking than this view; so great a number of Corinthian pillars, mixed with so little wall or solid building, afforded a most romantic variety of prospect."

It is greatly to be desired that some of our accomplished and enterprising photographers would pay a visit to Palmyra. The sketches and drawings of Wood and Dawkins are beautiful and faithful; but however skilful the pencil of the artist, however accurate the eye and the scale of the architect, in minuteness of detail and perfection of representation, neither the one nor the other can rival the sun picture. Then the monuments of the desert city are so numerous,

* *The Ruins of Palmyra, otherwise Tadmor in the Desert.* London, 1753.

their grouping so peculiar, and now, alas! so confused, that it is impossible to give a faithful delineation in sketch or drawing. And, besides, the artist can never command sufficient time and quiet for his work. He is dogged everywhere, as I can tell from sad experience, by prying and often persecuting Bedawîn, watching every opportunity privately to pilfer, or openly to plunder. In addition to the great monuments, and the exquisitely sculptured ornaments on portals, cornice, and pediment, there are those unique Palmyrene and bilingual inscriptions, which the photographer alone can reproduce. A skilful manipulator, with a good staff of assistants, would photograph all Palmyra in a single week, and would bring back with him to the West a series of pictures almost unrivalled for beauty, strangeness, and historic and antiquarian interest.

THE ISHMAELITE.

My journey to Palmyra was somewhat adventurous. My whole party consisted of an English friend, an Arak sheikh, and a camel driver,—four men in all, mounted on three dromedaries. To attempt to go from Damascus to Tadmor, through a hundred miles of desert infested by prowling bandits, and overrun by hostile Bedawîn, with such an escort may probably appear a little rash. And looking back upon it now from the calm seclusion of my library, where the excitement and romance of Eastern travel find no place, I am inclined to think it was rash. It had these good effects, however; it led me away from the ordinary and direct route; it brought me into close contact with a number of friendly tribes; it gave me large experience of genuine Arab hospitality; and it afforded me, besides, some very palpable, if not very pleasant, illustrations of the truth of the prophecy pronounced of old on Ishmael and his posterity:—"He will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him" (Gen. xvi. 12).

It was the fifth morning of our journey, and the sheikh told us that by noon we should see the ruins of Tadmor.

For three whole days we had already marched through the desert. Not, however, the desert of boyhood's fancy,—a plain of drifting sand, blazing in the fierce sunbeams, and bounded by the circle of the horizon. This desert had more pleasing features. There were long ranges, and clustering groups of mountains, presenting an agreeable variety of form and outline, and occasionally also of colour, though the general hue was that light grey, or yellowish white, so characteristic of the limestone strata of Syria. Here and there a bluff of dark red sandstone, or a dyke of black trap, or a graceful cone of snow-white chalk, broke the uniformity. At one or two points I saw a singular combination of colours in the same peak,—white, red, pink, and black,—reminding one of the gorgeous hues of the cliffs of Edom. Between the mountains were long winding vales, and deep rugged glens, now in early spring all spangled with the bright red anemone, and poppy, and gay convolvulus, intermixed with a few, a very few, tufts of green grass and green weeds. In all other respects it was a desert. Not a single house or sign of settled habitation was there; not a solitary patch of cultivated ground was anywhere to be seen; not a drop of water in stream, fountain, well, or tank did we ever meet with; not a tree or green shrub appeared on the sides of those bare, desolate hills. This is just such a region as the Old Testament writers would have called *Midbar* (the name usually given to the peninsula of Sinai, and the "wilderness of wandering"), a region devoid of cultivation and settled inhabitant, but affording good pasture for flocks and herds.

The desert was now all alive with the great tribe of the Anezeh who claim its pastures as their own. Every few miles we came upon a little circlet of black tents pitched in some retired vale, or near some secret well; and when we saw the droves of camels covering the country for miles and

miles, and the flocks of sheep and goats, we learned how the flocks and herds of Israel were fed during their forty years wandering in the *midbar* of Sinai.

Many strange and interesting traits of Arab life and law came under our notice. Whenever our path led us near an encampment, as was frequently the case, we always found some active sheikh, or venerable patriarch, sitting "in his tent door," and as soon as we were within hail, we heard the earnest words of welcome and invitation, which the Old Testament Scriptures had rendered long ago familiar to us: "Stay, my lord, stay. Pass not on till thou hast eaten bread, and rested under thy servant's tent. Alight and remain until thy servant kills a kid and prepares a feast." Again and again were these invitations given and urged in such a way that we found it impossible to resist them. In fact, our progress was seriously delayed by this truly patriarchal hospitality; and more than once or twice we were witnesses of the almost inconceivable rapidity with which the kid was killed, prepared, and served up with "butter and milk," after the manner of Abraham's feast at Mamre, (Gen. xviii.)

Another trait of desert life we also noticed. On several occasions we suddenly and unexpectedly found ourselves close to a solitary tent or small encampment, whose occupants were unknown to our leader, and suspected to be enemies of his tribe. We were then told to muffle up our faces, drive our dromedaries quickly up to the tent door and dismount. We were thus safe. Arab law made the master of the tent responsible for our lives and our entertainment. On such occasions not a word was spoken till we were seated within the tent, and not a question was ever asked during the whole time we remained as to who we were, whence we had come, or whither we were going. A similar trait of the Scottish Highlanders is beautifully illustrated by Scott in the "Lady of the Lake,"—

"Meet welcome to her guest she made,
And every courteous rite was paid,

> That hospitality could claim,
> Though all unasked his birth and name.
> Such then the reverence to a guest,
> That fellest foe might join the feast,
> And from his deadliest foeman's door
> Unquestioned turn, the banquet o'er."

It was doubtless such hospitality that Job boasted of when he said: "The stranger did not lodge in the street; I opened my doors to the traveller" (xxxi. 32).

It was, as I said, the fifth morning of our journey. We were up before the dawn, and the first grey streak of the new day was just visible along the eastern horizon as we mounted our dromedaries and rode off. The camp where we had spent the night lay in a broad valley, shut in on the north and south by steep ranges of naked limestone, but opening on the east, at the distance of a few miles, to a boundless plain. Our leader went straight to the northern ridge. Up it we scrambled by a track so steep, so rugged, and in places so narrow, that I often feared the dromedaries would topple over and dash us to pieces on the rocks far below. From the summit we had a commanding view. In front a broad plain, bare and grey, bounded on the north by a line of rocky mountains almost perfectly white. Behind us another plain, green with the grass of spring, and thickly studded with the black tents of Bedawîn.

We now turned eastward and descended diagonally into a plain so barren and desolate that we had never seen anything like it before. Its whole surface was covered with small fragments of white limestone, mixed with pieces of dark coloured flint. The sky was still, as it had been for three days, without a cloud; and the sunbeams fell on that parched desert like streams of liquid fire. The skin of our faces and lips shrivelled and cracked with the heat, our eyes could with difficulty endure the intense glare, and like Jacob "the drought consumed us," for the water was exhausted in our bottles. On we pressed with sweeping step and ship-like motion, in perfect silence, our very dromedaries appear-

ing to feel that this was a region to be traversed with all possible despatch.

Suddenly, on emerging from a little glen, a scene of rare beauty burst upon our view, taking us completely by surprise. A lake appeared in front, its margin fringed with shrubs and tall reeds; here and there an islet varied its surface, covered with dwarf palms, whose graceful feathery branches bent down to the glassy waters. Away along its further shore sped a solitary Arab on a dromedary,—now marching double, the man and the shadow; now raising the glittering spray as the animal's feet dipped lightly in the margin of the lake. It was a fairy scene, looking all the more enchanting from contrast with the utter barrenness of the surrounding plain.

Again we dipped into a glen that crossed our path. We pressed up the further side; we looked all round. The lake was gone. It was the mirage. The solitary Arab on his fleet dromedary swept past us; and so great was our surprise that we were prepared to see him vanish too.

Swiftly and cautiously the sheikh led us along the base of the mountains which rose up far overhead, here in long, gravelly slopes, and there in frowning precipices capped by great masses of projecting rock, which seemed as if an infant's touch would hurl them down upon our heads. We surmounted a rocky spur and the sheikh paused. "Look," he exclaimed, pointing to a narrow opening in the low line of hills which crossed the plain in front. We saw a castle crowning a conical peak; we saw tall slender towers on the slopes, and in the bottom of the pass below. "That is Tadmor. *Yallah!*"

But the next moment two wild Arab horsemen reined up their panting steeds within pistol shot. They spoke not a word. They gave not a sign. One of them, after taking a rapid glance at our party, wheeled his horse and went off at full gallop across the plain. The other remained, motionless as a statue, leaning upon his long lance. Our chief was si-

lent. He seemed almost paralyzed. His dromedary wandered about at will cropping the dry weeds. Something was wrong, we knew not well what. We were not left long in suspense. A cloud of dust appeared approaching us across the plain. It opened, and we saw a troop of some forty or fifty horsemen charging us at full speed. The next moment a score of glittering lances were brandished fiercely round our heads. Resistance would have been worse than useless. We were prisoners.

We were led off across the plain for some two miles, and we then met the whole tribe of our captors on the march. It was a strangely interesting sight. Far as the eye could see the plain was covered with countless droves of camels, and flocks of sheep, and horsemen, and dromedaries laden with tents, and all manner of furniture and utensils. The sheikh, who happened to have my animal by the halter, stuck his spear in the ground and dismounted. It was the signal for encamping. In a moment the tents were on the ground, and hundreds of women wielding the heavy mallets with which they drive in the large iron tent-pins. This is always their work, and they do it with singular dexterity. Looking at them, I could not but remember Jael. "She put her hand to the *tent-pin* (the Hebrew word translated 'nail' is the very same as the Arabic name for 'tent-pin'); her right hand to the hammer of the workers; she hammered Sisera, and smote his head; she beat and pierced his temples" (Judges v. 26).

We had other illustrations of the same tragic story when the tents were pitched. We were thirsty and they brought us milk fresh from the camel. Then they set before us a huge metal dish of *leben* ("sour curds"). "Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be; blessed shall she be above women in the tent. *Water he asked, milk she gave him. In a lordly dish she set curds before him.*" (ver. 25.)

"TADMOR IN THE WILDERNESS."

At first our prospects in our desert prison looked gloomy enough. A large ransom was demanded. Uncomfortable threats were thrown out when we curtly refused it. Gradually, however, our hopes brightened, and by noon the next day all was so satisfactorily arranged that our captors escorted us in grand style to Tadmor.

The first view of that classic city was strange and impressive far beyond all our anticipations. We reached the pass through the low eastern ridge; we began the ascent of a rising ground that forms the crown of the pass. So far we saw nothing except the old castle overhead on the left, and a few tower-like tombs on the hill sides. The crest was gained at last, and then the whole site of the city burst upon our view.

Immediately before us lay a white plain, some three or four miles in circuit, entirely covered, and in many places heaped up with ruins. Through the centre ran a Corinthian colonnade. Away beyond it, on the east, rose the great temple of the sun, itself almost a city for magnitude. To the right and left, in endless variety, were scattered groups of columns, and single monumental pillars; while everywhere the ground was thickly strewn with broken shafts, and great shapeless piles of ruins, all white and glistening in the bright sunlight. Such a sight no eye ever saw elsewhere:—

> "——Temples, palaces, a wondrous dream,
> That passes not away; for many a league,
> Illumine yet the desert."

All too was desolate. Like bleached bones on a long neglected battle-field those ruins lie, lonely and forsaken.

On the southern side of the city a tiny stream flows from a chasm in the mountain side, and winds eastward fringed with grass and tender foliage, until it ends in a circlet of gardens, the brilliant verdure of whose orchards and palm-groves contrasts beautifully with the intense whiteness of

the ruins and of the boundless plain beyond. Palmyra was a double oasis in the desert—an oasis of nature and of art; of physical richness, and of architectural splendour.

THE TEMPLE OF THE SUN.

This is the finest building in Palmyra, and for extent and beauty it is scarcely surpassed in the world. A court, two hundred and fifty yards square, was encompassed by a wall seventy feet high, richly ornamented externally with pilasters, frieze, and cornice. The entrance was through a portico of ten columns. Round the whole interior ran a double colonnade, forming "porches" or cloisters like those of the temple at Jerusalem. Each pillar in the cloisters had a pedestal, or bracket, for a statue. *Near*, but not *in* the centre of the court, is the *naos*, or temple itself—in this respect also resembling Herod's temple. It was encircled by a single row of fluted Corinthian columns, with bronze capitals, supporting an unbroken entablature richly ornamented with festoons of fruit and flowers, held up at intervals by winged genii. The effect of the whole—the white pillars, the bronze capitals, the sculptured cornice, the noble cloisters, the long ranges of statues—must have been grand. We have scarcely any building now that will bear comparison with it.

The encircling wall is still tolerably perfect, and the naos is nearly complete. Above a hundred of the pillars in the cloisters remain standing; but the greater part of the interior is encumbered with the miserable hovels of the modern inhabitants, who have all clustered together here for safety.

THE GRAND COLONNADE.

Next to the Temple of the Sun the Colonnade is the most remarkable object in Palmyra. Commencing on the east at a splendid triumphal arch, it runs through the centre of the city, and is nearly a mile in length. There were originally four rows of columns, about sixty feet high, forming a central and two side avenues. When complete, it must have

contained above *fifteen hundred* columns, more than one hundred and fifty of which still stand. Each column has on its inner side about eight feet above its base, a bracket for a statue. One remarkable feature of the Colonnade is, that it is bent slightly in the middle; and on looking along it one sees how much this adds to its effect. What a noble promenade for the old Palmyrenes! sheltered from the sun's fierce rays; open to every gentle breeze; statues of their country's nobles and patriots, poets and philosophers, ranged in long lines beside them; and the background filled in with gorgeous façades of temples and palaces, tombs and monuments! Broken and shattered though it is, with hundreds of its polished shafts prostrate, and long ranges of its sculptured cornice lying amidst dust and rubbish, the Colonnade of Tadmor forms one of the most imposing pictures in the world. I was never tired looking at it. I saw some new and striking feature from every point of view.

It is a curious fact that every great city of the East had a *via recta*—"a Straight street," or "High street"—somewhat similar in plan and ornament to that at Palmyra. Traces of the streets and colonnades may still be seen at Gerasa, Samaria, Bozrah, and Apamea; and after a little investigation I discovered that "the street called Straight" in Damascus (Acts ix. 11) was of the same kind.

THE TOMBS.

The Palmyrenes, like all other Eastern nations, gave special honour to the memory of the dead. Among the most beautiful and remarkable of the monuments are sepulchres. Some of those within the city were of great size, and appear to have been intended for temples as well as tombs. Rock sepulchres, so common throughout Syria, Edom, and Egypt, are here unknown; and their place is taken by tower-shaped structures which seem to be peculiar to Palmyra. They are very numerous. One sees them in the plain all round the city, on both sides of the pass which leads to it from the

west, and a few are perched on the tops of neighbouring peaks. The plan of all is the same, though they vary greatly in the style and richness of the internal ornaments. They are square, measuring from twenty to thirty feet on each side, generally four stories in height. Each story consists of a single chamber constructed with tiers of deep *loculi*, or recesses, on each side, reaching from floor to ceiling. It was usual to place busts of the dead, with names and dates, either at the openings of the *loculi*, or on the walls or ceilings. The decorations of some of these mansions of the dead are exceedingly rich and chaste. The tiers of recesses are separated by slender pillars of marble, and the walls and ceilings pannelled and ornamented with festoons of fruit and flowers, and finely executed busts. Inscriptions are numerous, and almost all in the Palmyrene character. The effect of the decorations is greatly heightened by chaste colouring. The ground is generally a delicate blue, which throws out in bolder relief the pure white masses of sculpture. The inscriptions on these tombs show that they were almost all erected during the first three centuries of our era.

In addition to the tower-tombs there are in the plain to the north and south of the city immense numbers of subterranean sepulchres. They are not hewn in the rock, but appear to have been built in natural or artificial cavities, and then covered over with soil. Those which have been opened were found to contain *loculi*, busts, statues, and inscriptions like the other sepulchres. Numbers of them still remain unexplored, and may one day afford rich treasures to the antiquary. The mode of sepulture appears to have been always as follows:—The body was embalmed, wrapped tightly up in linen, and placed in a recess, the door of which was then closed and hermetically sealed.

The walls of Palmyra are now in ruins. In some places it is with difficulty one can even trace their foundations. Not a building within the city remains standing. A strong castle, situated on the summit of a steep conical peak, a

short distance from the city, is also in ruins. On a calm bright evening during my stay, I clambered up the hill, scaled the shattered battlements, and took my seat on the top of its highest tower. I can never forget that view. It is photographed on my memory in all its vast extent, in all its wild grandeur, in all its strange and terrible desolation. Westward my eye roamed far away, through the long vista of a bare white valley, to where the sun's last rays gilt the snow-capped summits of Lebanon. On the north and south were mountain ranges which, though naked and barren, now exhibited a richness and delicacy of colouring never seen in the west. It was not that of green turf, nor of brown heath, nor of mottled and variegated foliage, nor of transparent blue tinted by the air of heaven. It was different from all these. The highest peaks and crags were tipped as with burnished gold. Beneath was a clear silvery gray, which was shaded gradually into a deep rich purple in the glens and valleys. These soft and strange tints gave the mountains a dreamy, ethereal look, such as one sees on some of the wondrous pictures of Turner. . . . . On the east a glowing horizon swept round a semicircle of unbroken, snow-white plain. At my feet, in the centre of all, lay the ruins of the desert city, magnificent even in their utter desolation.

HISTORY.

Solomon "built Tadmor in the wilderness" (1 Kings ix. 18; 2 Chron. viii. 4). The question has been frequently asked, Why did Solomon build a city in the midst of the desert, so far distant from his own kingdom? The answer is easy to any one who knows the history of the period and the geography of Bible lands. Solomon was a commercial monarch. One of his great aims was to make Palestine the centre of commercial enterprise. To secure a safe and easy route for the caravans that imported the treasures of India, Persia, and Mesopotamia, was of the first importance. Tad-

mor lies half way between the Euphrates and the borders of Syria. It contains the only copious fountain in that arid desert. Some halting-place was necessary. Water was absolutely necessary. Consequently, Palmyra was founded as a caravan station.

For a thousand years we hear no more of it. Then Pliny describes it as a large and powerful independent city. In the second century of our era it fell under the dominion of Rome, and to that age may be attributed most of its splendid monuments. When the Emperor Valerian was conquered and captured by the Persians, his unworthy son left him in the hands of the conquerors; but Odeinathus, a citizen of Palmyra, marched against them, defeated them, and took the whole province of Mesopotamia. The services thus rendered to Rome were considered so great that Odeinathus was associated in the empire with Gallienus. This brave man was poisoned at Emesa; but he bequeathed his power to a worthy successor—ZENOBIA, his widow. The names of Palmyra and Zenobia can never be dissociated. Unfortunately, ambition prompted her to usurp the high sounding title, "Queen of the East." But Rome could brook no rival. Her army was defeated, her desert city laid in ashes, and she herself led in fetters to grace the victor's triumph. Poor Zenobia! she deserved a better fate. If common humanity could not prevent Roman citizens from thus exulting over a fallen foe, the memory of her husband's services might have saved her from the indignity of appearing before a mob in chains.

The period of Palmyra's glory was now past, and we have scarcely a notice in history of its decline and fall. At the present moment about fifty wretched hovels, built within the court of the Temple of the Sun, form the only representatives of the great city of Zenobia, and of "Tadmor in the wilderness."



IV.

Damascus.

"This region, surely, is not of the earth,—
Was it not dropped from heaven?"

DAMASCUS is the oldest city in the world; and it is the only city which can claim the title "perennial." Its origin is lost in the mists of antiquity; and during the whole historic age it has been a great city. Josephus says it was founded by Uz the son of Aram and grandson of Shem. This is probably true; for it was long the capital of the western division of that country which Aram colonized, and to which he gave his name. It is unfortunate that this fact does not appear in the English version of the Bible, because the Hebrew name *Aram* is there rendered "Syria."

But by whomsoever founded, one thing is certain regarding Damascus. When Abraham crossed the desert from Haran *three thousand eight hundred years ago*, the city was already standing on the banks of the Abana; and from that day till this it has held a first place among the capitals of Western Asia. It has seen many changes. It has passed through many hands. It has been ruled by many masters. Syrians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, and Turks, have in turn governed or oppressed it; but it has lived and flourished under them all. Of the horrors of war it has had its full share. Not less than twelve times it had been pillaged and burned; yet it has always arisen with new beauty from its ashes.

THE KINGDOM OF DAMASCUS.

Damascus was the head of a kingdom which exercised considerable influence on the destinies of the Jews, and occupied a prominent place in Old Testament history. The kingdom embraced a chain of Anti-Lebanon, and extended on the north to Hamath, and on the south to Bashan. Though it lay within the "Land of Promise," it is not mentioned in the early history of the Jews. True, Abraham's steward was a Damascene; and if we can depend upon a very ancient local tradition, the great patriarch himself resided for a time in the city. When the Israelites entered Palestine, Hermon was their northern border. Neither their wishes nor their abilities stretched beyond that noble mountain. They found ample room in the hills and valleys of the south, and ample occupation in expelling the warlike Canaanites who dwelt there.

It was when David, firmly established on his throne, extended his conquests to the Euphrates, endeavouring to make the "Land of Possession" coterminous with the "Land of Promise" (compare 2 Sam. viii. 3–9; Gen. xv. 18–21),—it was then Damascus and Israel became rivals. For three centuries and more that rivalry continued, often entailing sad calamities on both. But this melancholy history is chequered with some romantic episodes which make the Bible reader feel a kind of home interest in the old city.

BIBLE STORIES.

First we have the grand expedition of Benhadad, when with two-and-thirty vassal monarchs he invaded Israel, and sat down before Samaria. His insulting demand is well known (1 Kings xx. 5, 6); and his awful threat when it was refused almost makes one shudder,—"The gods do so to me, and more also, if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls for all the people that follow me" (ver. 10). It was an idle boast; for while the haughty Damascene "was drinking himself drunk in the pavilions, he and the kings," a

handful of Jewish warriors surprised the camp and put the whole host to flight (ver. 20).

It is a singular fact, showing the permanence of names in the East, that one of the principal families in Damascus, at the present moment, is called *Beit Haddad*, "The house of Hadad."

Next we have the story of Naaman. Naaman was commander-in-chief of the armies of Damascus, he was one of the greatest generals, and greatest men of his age; but "he was a leper." In some warlike expedition he had captured a little Jewish maid, who became a slave in his harim. Captivity cannot extinguish feelings of compassion in woman's heart. Seeing her master's sufferings the maid one day exclaimed, "Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy." To Samaria Naaman went. Elisha did not condescend to see him; but sent him word to go and wash in the Jordan. The proud Damascene was indignant: "Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage." The whole scene was thoroughly Oriental. The servants now interfere. Better counsels prevail; and Naaman washed and was cleansed (2 Kings v.)

The memory of Naaman clings to Damascus yet. Outside the walls, on the banks of the Abana, is a leper hospital, which, tradition says, occupies the site of Naaman's house. I have often visited it, and when looking on its miserable inmates, all disfigured and mutilated by their loathsome disease, I could not wonder that the heart of the little Jewish captive was moved by her master's sufferings.

Then follows the miraculous deliverance of Israel from the king of Damascus by Elisha. Having learned that Elisha

was the cause of all his failures, the king resolved to seize him. Accordingly, on a certain night, he surrounded the village of Dothan, in which the prophet dwelt, with horsemen and chariots. In the morning Elisha's servants came trembling and crying, "Alas, my master! how shall we do?" "Fear not," said the man of God; "they that be with us are more than they that be with them." Then he prayed, "Lord, open his eyes." "And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw; *and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha*" (2 Kings vi. 13–17). The result is well known. We can imagine the surprise and terror of the soldiers of Damascus when they found themselves alone and helpless in the stronghold of their enemy.

What a glorious type of saving power is here! As it was with Elisha, so it ever is with God's suffering children. The hosts of heaven encompass them. Were their eyes only opened by Divine agency, they might see, as Elisha saw, the flaming chariots and magnificent array of God's armies marshalled round them. The prophet's vision illustrate the apostle's words regarding the angels—"Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb. i. 14).

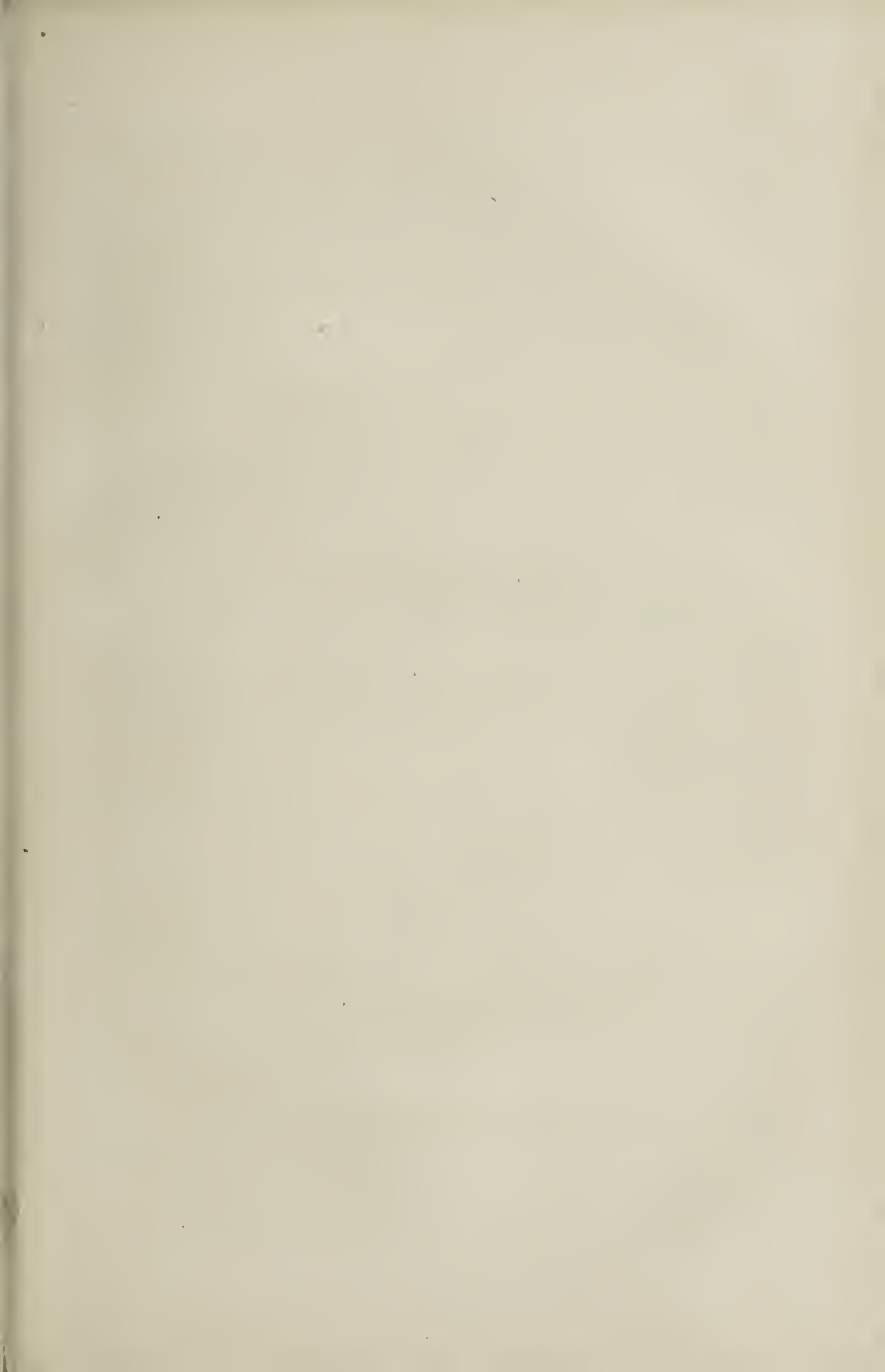
The memorable interview between Elisha and Hazael follows next. Elijah had been commissioned to anoint Hazael; but we have no record of the act. His successor, Elisha, was now upon a visit to the city. Benhadad, the king, was sick, and sent Hazael to ask the prophet whether he would recover. Elisha read the thoughts that lurked in the traitor's heart, and drew such a picture of his future career that Hazael cried in indignation and horror, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" Yet the first act in that long and bloody drama he perpetrated that very night. Returning to the city, Hazael murdered his master and mounted the throne. Thus terminated the royal line of *Benhadad.*

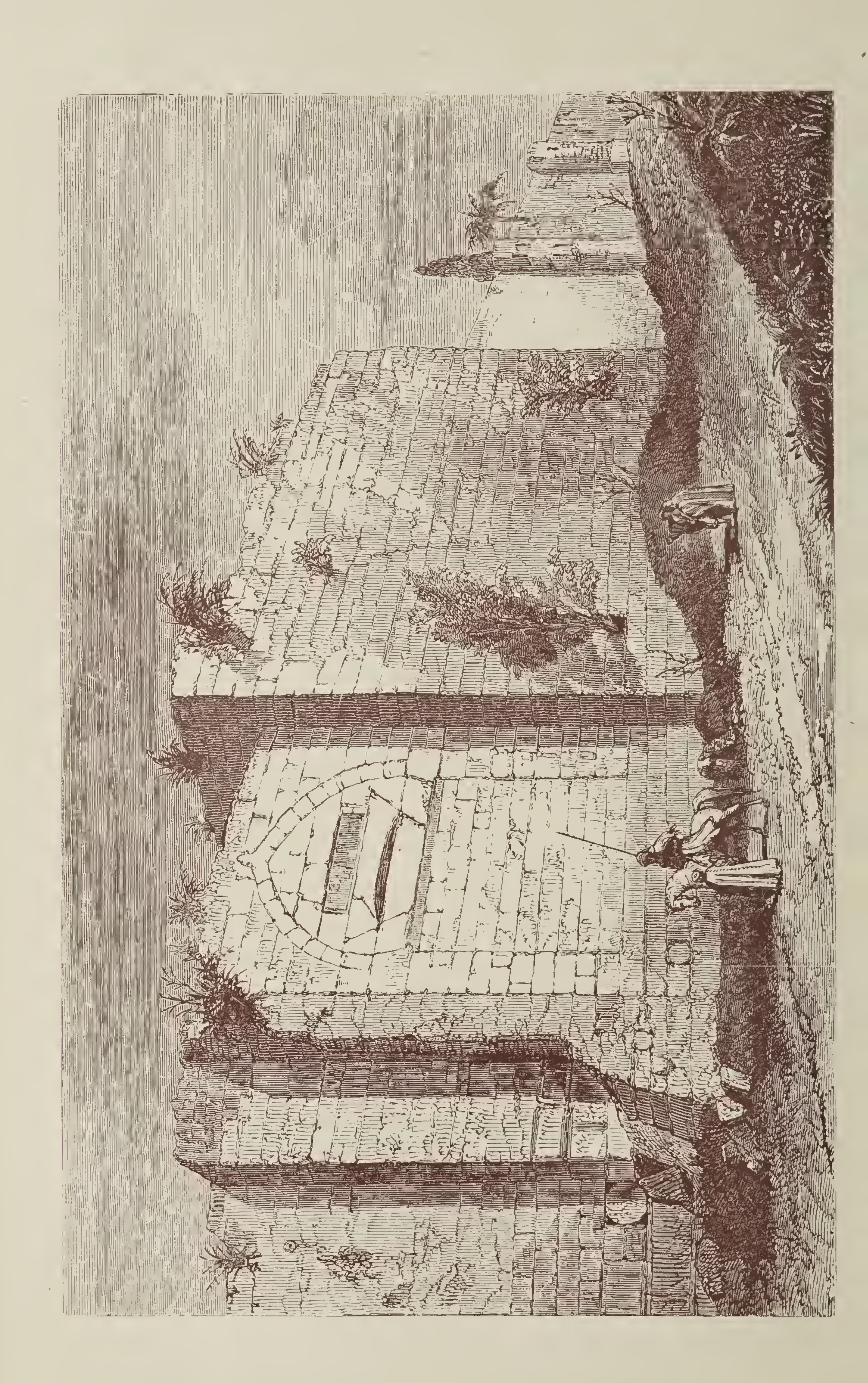
The Jews of Damascus have a synagogue over the spot where, according to tradition, Elijah once lived, and where Elisha and Hazael met. It is two miles from the city, in a village called Jobar. It is worthy of note that the village is inhabited by Mohammedans, and that the Jews have not, and, so far as is known, never had house or land there except the synagogue. There must be some truth in the tradition, otherwise the Jews could scarcely have acquired an interest in a remote spot in a country which their forefathers never possessed. I have often ridden out to Jobar. It is a sweet, quiet ride. The winding lanes are shaded by the spreading boughs of magnificent walnuts, and lined with blooming orchards.

> "Here the vines
> Wed each her elm, and o'er the golden grain
> Hang their luxuriant clusters, chequering
> The sunshine."

Here and there the deep, swift Abana shoots out from a thicket of weeping willows, and dashes in snowy sheets of foam over an old weir. Canals cross and recross the path, fringed with tall reeds and long sedgy grass, and spanned by rustic bridges that rock and creak beneath the horses' feet. Jobar is a favourite resort of wealthy Jews, male and female. It is their park and their café. There they spend their long summer afternoons, often the entire night under bowers of vine and jasmine. Not unfrequently the groves resound with mirth, and revelry, and song. Strange mode this in which to celebrate the memory and honour the shrines of Israel's great prophets!

The enmity of Damascus to the kingdom of Judah brought about its own destruction. The Jews, unable to contend with so powerful a foe, bought the alliance of Assyria. Damascus was attacked and captured, its people were carried away to the banks of the Kir, and an Assyrian colony placed in their room. Damascus thus lost, and lost for ever, its independence. Then "the kingdom was taken





away from Damascus," "Damascus was taken away from being a city" (Isaiah xvii. 1–3).

PAUL'S CONVERSION.

Eight centuries pass—eight centuries of wars and revolutions. Damascus has become a Roman city. But it is temporarily held by a rebel prince, Aretas, king of Arabia. It is a time of national disturbance, for the empire has been suddenly left without a head. It is a time, too, of grave anxiety and fear among the members of the little Christian Church in the city. Saul of Tarsus, having dipped his hands in the blood of the first Christian martyr, and having well-nigh extinguished the Church in the Holy City, is on his way to Damascus, "breathing threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts ix. 1). But Jesus whom he persecuted met him on the way, and when he enters the city he is no longer the proud, ruthless persecutor; he is the humble, blind, conscience-stricken disciple, breathing the prayer, "Lord, what wouldest thou have me to do?"

This miracle of mercy and of power made Damascus "holy ground." It exalted it to an honoured place by the side of Bethlehem and Nazareth, Jerusalem and Hermon. The Son of God was there, if not in the flesh, in glory and in power, appearing to Paul as unto "one born out of due time" (1 Cor. xv. 8). In Damascus the great missionary of the Gentiles first preached the gospel (Acts ix. 19, 20). There he first experienced the bitterness of the persecution he had himself been instrumental in kindling. He became the object of special hatred to his infatuated countrymen. His labours in the city roused the indignation of the Jews, and the success of his evangelistic work in Arabia, Aretas' hereditary kingdom, excited the suspicions and fears of the rulers, so that "the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me; and through a window, in a basket, was I let

down by the wall, and escaped his hands" (2 Cor. xi. 32, 33).

Tradition has localized every event in Paul's story,—the scene of the conversion, the "street called Straight," the house of Judas, the spot where the angel appeared to Ananias, the window in the city wall,—all are pointed out. Time after time I have visited them. Most of them may be apocryphal, some of them are unquestionably so; but in this "city of the infidels," they have all an intense interest for the Christian. They rouse him to a sense of the reality of great events, and of the power of great principles and truths, which he is only too apt to forget. The *Straight Street* is real. There can be no doubt about it. And on the old wall I have seen many a projecting chamber, and many a latticed window from which a friendly hand could "let down" a fugitive.

ASPECT OF THE CITY.

How beautiful for situation is Damascus! Its own poets have called it "The pearl of the East." The view of the city and plain from the brow of Lebanon is unequalled in Syria,—probably it is unsurpassed in the world. One gazes upon it enraptured when before him; and when far away, though long years have intervened, memory dwells upon it as upon some bright and joyous vision of childhood's happy days. Forty centuries have passed over the city, yet it retains the freshness of youth. Its palaces look as gorgeous, its houses as gay, its gold-tipped minarets and domes as bright as if only completed yesterday. Its gardens and orchards and far-reaching groves, rich in foliage and blossoms, wrap the city round like a mantle of green velvet powdered with pearls. Its rivers, better yet than all the waters of Israel, having burst their mountain barriers, send a thousand streams meandering over its plain, sparkling in the sunlight, and spreading verdure and beauty along their course.

The city looks so peaceful there, reposing in its evergreen bower, far removed from the din of commerce, and the rude whirl of modern life, and the jarring turmoil of the world's politics, that one would think it had never felt the shock of war, that its soil had never been polluted by crime, and that Abana and Pharpar had never run red with the blood of thousands slaughtered mercilessly.

Distance lends enchantment to the view. To me Damascus looked like a vision of Paradise when I first saw it,—all peace and beauty. The vision has been rudely dissipated,—it vanished the moment I crossed the city gate. *Without*, nature smiled joyously, the landscape was bathed in the ruddy light of the declining sun; the apricot orchards seemed to blush at their own surpassing loveliness, and the gentle breezes that rustled softly through the feathery tops of the palms were laden with the perfume of the rose and the violet. *Within*, how great, how painful was the contrast! Houses, mosques, streets, all the works of man, in fact, bore the marks of neglect and decay; and man himself seemed to sit there mourning moodily over waning glory. The houses are shapeless piles of sun-dried bricks and wood, and sadly out of repair; the streets are narrow, crooked and filthy, paved with big rough stones, and half covered with ragged mats and withered branches. Scores of miserable dogs lie in the dust, too lazy to bark, or even to crawl from under the horse's feet. In little stalls like shelves, along the sides of these lanes, squat ranges of long-bearded, white-turbaned, sallow-visaged men, telling their beads, and mingling with muttered prayers to Allah curses deep and deadly on the infidels who dare to cross their path or enter their holy city. But the oddest sight the stranger's eye falls on are the women. He can scarcely tell at first what they are. Not a feature, not a member is visible, except the two feet, encased in quaint-looking yellow boots. Head, arms, hands, body—the whole person, in short, is wrapt up in a thing like a winding-sheet. Thus arrayed they stalk about like

ghosts come back from another world to torment those who doomed them on earth to lives of slavery.

In the centre of the city the houses are better, and the bazaars richer. The people that crowd them, too, are better dressed, and their costumes more varied. In fact, nearly all the costumes of the world are there, and one is never tired looking and laughing at them.

Damascus has been often described. Nearly every nook and corner has been explored, and its wonders laid before Europe by the pen, the pencil, or the photograph. Everybody now knows all about the internal splendour of its palaces, and the fabled beauty of their inmates. I shall not here add a word to what has been written on these subjects. I have another tale to tell—a sad tale, but one which illustrates the character of the people who now rule this unhappy land; and which shows how vividly its future doom was pictured before the eyes of God's prophets, in ancient days. The recent massacres are but fulfilments of Ezekiel's predictions: "*I will bring the worst of the heathen, and they shall possess their houses. . . . . Destruction cometh; and they shall seek peace, and there shall be none.*" (vii. 24, 25).

THE MASSACRE OF 1860.

A sad change has taken place in Damascus even since I was there. A whole quarter of the city has been burned, and nearly six thousand of its inhabitants butchered. This terrible tragedy, unparalleled since the days of Tamerlane, demands a passing notice; and its authors and abettors deserve to be held up to the execration of generations to come. The Christians of the city have been all but annihilated; and for no other reason than that they were Christians. Their bones lie unburied amid the ashes of their homes; and their blood, which has sunk into the ground, cries, if not for vengeance, at least for justice, upon that race of tyrant fanatics, who terminated ages of unceasing persecution by a wholesale massacre.

On the morning of Monday, July 9th, 1860, Damascus contained some twenty-three thousand Christians, including seven thousand refugees from Lebanon. The Christians occupied a distinct quarter of the city, near the East Gate, and extending on both sides of the *Straight Street.* In intelligence and enterprise they were far in advance of the Mohammedans. They were peaceable and respectful in demeanour. Most of them, imbued with hereditary fear, cringed before the proud Muslems who had so long ruled them. They had taken no part in the struggle between Druse and Maronite. They were in no way connected with the mountain tribes. There was not a single Druse in the city; and the Christians had no quarrel with their Muslem fellow-citizens.

For a week or two previous threats had been uttered; and the Christians, unarmed and helpless, began to anticipate evil. For several days they had shut themselves up in their houses, hoping thus to escape insult and injury. It was in vain. About two o'clock on the day referred to, an excited mob was seen by a resident Englishman proceeding toward the Christian quarter, shouting their well-known war-cry, *Ullahu Akbar!* He guessed their purpose, and he tried to stop them. He was known widely, and respected by all classes, yet his life would have fallen a sacrifice to his humanity, had not a friend—a Mohammedan of rank—removed him from the street.

The mob rapidly increased. A few were armed with old muskets and pistols; others had daggers, axes, clubs, and such rude weapons as first came to hand. Boys and women were there; the latter urging on the men. Having reached the Straight Street, on the borders of the Christian quarter, they, after a brief pause, made a rush upon the house of the Russian consul—a Greek, who had become especially obnoxious to the fanatics. The door was strong, but it soon yielded to blows of axes. The inmates, paralyzed by fear, did not attempt resistance. Every male was instantly mur-

dered. From room to room the fiends ran in search of the consul who had gone out a short time before. When they could not find him, they seized the women, dragged them into the open court, and there treated them with the most inhuman barbarity. They then pillaged the house and set it on fire.—This was the first act in the tragedy.

House after house was now broken open. The male inhabitants—old men and infants—were all murdered; the females outraged; valuables carried off; and the torch applied. Night came, but the carnage did not cease. The flames of the burning houses lighted up the whole city, revealing in every street and lane scenes of brutal outrage and savage cruelty, such as the world has seldom witnessed.

A large body of the more respectable Christians, seeing that nothing less than their total extermination was aimed at, left their homes and sought an asylum in the houses of Muslem friends. But they soon found that fanaticism ignores friendship. All were received with coldness; some were driven away; and not a few were handed over to the mob. A considerable number, however, contrived to reach the Castle, which was occupied by a Turkish garrison; and eventually most of the women and children found a refuge there, or in the house of Abd-el-Kader.

The outbreak was known to the Pasha from the commencement. He had been warned of the danger long ere it occurred. A dozen energetic police could have quelled it when the Russian consulate was attacked. Fifty soldiers could have quelled the mob at any moment during the massacre. On the first evening a company of Turkish "regulars," with some native police, were sent to the scene of the outbreak, but they at once fraternized with the mob. A British subject, who was an eye-witness of the leading events during that reign of terror, saw soldiers and citizens together plundering, burning, and murdering. When resistance was offered in any house, it was set on fire; and when the wretched inmates, old or young, men or women,

attempted to escape, the soldiers drove them back into the flames with the points of their bayonets. When the troops and mob fraternized, the doom of the Christians was sealed. Before that time only a small number of the lowest rabble had taken part in the outbreak; now the fanatical of every class, high and low, rich and poor, rushed to the onslaught. To prevent the possibility of resistance, a united plan of attack was organized. A strong breeze was blowing from the west; they began at that side of the Christian quarter, and burned all before them. For three days and three nights this terrible work of pillage, burning, and slaughter continued. It ceased only when every article of value was carried off, every house in ashes, and every male either dead or in a place of refuge.

Among the victims was the Rev. William Graham, missionary of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. At the commencement of the outbreak, he saw a young Christian lying in the street, wounded and dying. Thoughtless of danger, he ran for a surgeon; but he was soon assailed by the mob and forced to fly for his life. He took refuge in the house of a Muslem, called Mustapha Agha, chief of the police—a man who had gained his wealth and his office through the influence of the English consul. The Agha would scarcely admit him; and when at length he forced his way in, pursued by a blood-thirsty mob, he found that Mustapha and his police were among the most active agents of destruction. During the night, Mr. Graham escaped, and found a temporary asylum with another Muslem. It appears that in the course of the following day, Mustapha Agha heard where Mr. Graham was concealed, and sent a number of his police with a traitorous message, that they had orders from the Pasha to escort him, and other refugees, to the house of the English consul. Under this escort Graham and a number of others set out; but with one exception they never reached their destination. Poor Graham fell in the open street, pierced by the bullets of his ruffian escort!

The events which followed the massacres, and the prolonged inquiries and discussions of commissioners, are well known. The wily Turks succeeded as usual in their crafty policy of arraying against each other the rival ambassadors and governments of Europe. The Christian quarter of Damascus is still a blackened ruin. Merchants once rich and prosperous, are dependants on charity. Vast numbers of widows and orphans are homeless, penniless wanderers. The Turkish Government by treachery and cruelty without a parallel, have gained their object. They have all but annihilated Christian influence in Syria. They have destroyed the prestige of European power in that country, and they have so far prepared the way for carrying out their own destructive policy without fear of internal opposition.

When will English statesmen open their eyes to the true character of the Turks? When will they turn their attention to the real source of all the troubles and calamities of unhappy Syria? The massacre of 1860 was no sudden or unexpected ebullition of popular fury; it was long premeditated and skilfully planned. Mohammedans were its projectors. The first impulse was given from Constantinople. Turkish officials in Syria, high and low, fostered the fanatical spirit of the populace, and even when the guilt of these men was proved, every possible effort was made in high places to screen them from the punishment so justly due to their crimes.

Our own noble commissioner, Lord Dufferin, acted in his difficult and delicate position with an energy and an enlightened zeal worthy of all praise. In him England had a fitting representative. To him the Christian sects in Syria, and the Druses also, owe a debt of gratitude which they can never repay. He took a wise and statesmanlike view of Syria's dangers and wants; and had his policy been adopted it would have gone far to secure the lasting peace, and promote the permanent prosperity of that unhappy country.

HOLY PLACES OF DAMASCUS.

In and around Damascus tradition has located the scenes of many events recorded in sacred history. A few of these are worthy of notice, as tending to illustrate Bible history.

The Straight Street.—"Arise, and go into the street which is called *Straight*, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus" (Acts vii. 11). The old city —the nucleus of Damascus—is oval in shape, and surrounded by a wall, the foundations of which are Roman, if not earlier, and the upper part a patch-work of all subsequent ages. Its greatest diameter is marked by the *Straight Street*, which is an English mile in length. At its east end is *Bab Shurky*, "the East Gate," a fine Roman portal, having a central and two side arches. The central and southern arches have been walled up for more than eight centuries, and the northern now forms the only entrance to the city. In front of it are the massive remains of a tower built in the early days of Muslem rule. The present appearance of the gateway is picturesque though dilapidated. The crumbling Saracenic battlements and wooden minaret contrasting well with the massive simplicity of the Roman architecture. In the Roman age, and down to the time of the Mohammedan conquest (A.D. 634) a noble street ran in a straight line from the gate westward through the city. It was divided by Corinthian colonnades into three avenues, opposite to the three portals. A modern street runs in the line of the old one; but it is narrow and irregular. Though many of the columns remain, they are mostly hidden by the houses and shops. This is "the street called *Straight*," along which Paul was led by the hand, and in which was the house of Judas, where he lodged.

The Great Mosque.—Tradition has placed in one of the crypts of this vast structure "the head of John the Baptist," and has thus made it "the sanctuary of Damascus." The building was originally a temple, erected on the plan

of that at Jerusalem. In the fourth century it was remodelled and made the Cathedral Church; and in the eighth century it was appropriated by the Mohammedans. Its form is that of a church or basilica, with nave and aisles divided by Corinthian columns. In the centre is a small dome; and at one side is a spacious cloistered court, flagged with marble, and ornamented with fountains. It is the most conspicuous building in the city, its dome and three lofty minarets being seen from a great distance. Near it is the castle or citadel, a huge pile founded in the days of the city's power, and now fast falling to ruin. Within its walls many of the Christians found an asylum during the massacre.

Place of Paul's Conversion.—A tradition as old as the time of the Crusades locates this "holy place" about ten miles south-west of the city, near a village called Kaukab. In the spring of 1858 I made a pilgrimage to it. It was a sunny day, and all nature looked bright and beautiful. The ride was charming; at first through luxuriant gardens, and orchards, and groves, where—

> "The vines in light festoons
> From tree to tree, the trees in avenues,
> And every avenue a covered walk,
> Hung with black clusters."

From a sombre olive grove I emerged on the open plain, and soon found the line of the ancient road—the road along which Paul must have come. It crosses a low ridge which separates the valleys of the Abana and Pharpar; and on the top of the ridge is the scene of the conversion. There appeared to me to be much probability in the tradition. At this spot the traveller from the south obtains his first view of Damascus. On gaining it Paul saw before him the city to which he was bound. His fiery zeal would naturally be inflamed by the sight, and anew he would there "breathe out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." Would it not seem that that was the time when his proud spirit was humbled; and when the passions of the

fanatic were quenched for ever by the flood of divine grace? "As he journeyed, *he came near Damascus;* and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven" (Acts ix. 3).

I could not resist the belief that I there stood upon the very scene of the miracle. But be this as it may, the features of the landscape were the same as Paul saw;—on the left rose Hermon in all its majesty, a spotless pyramid of snow; the long range of Anti-Lebanon, gray and bleak, stretching eastward to the horizon; the broad plain in front, with its many-tinted foliage; all around little villages embowered in blooming orchards; and away in the distance the bright buildings of the city. The same figures, too, gave life to the landscape;—long strings of camels bearing the wheat of Bashan; cavaliers from the desert armed with sword and spear; peasants in the fields driving their yokes of oxen with sharp goads—goads which illustrated, if they did not suggest, the words of the Lord, "It is hard for thee to kick against the *goads.*" The same cloudless sky was there; and the same sun, pouring down a flood of light on city, plain, and mountain. "At mid-day suddenly a great light," shone from heaven; and the greatness of that light those only can know who have seen and felt a Syrian sun shining in its strength, and who remember that the light which shone on Paul was "above the brightness of the sun" (Acts xxvi. 13).

The Sanctuary of Abraham, or *Makam Ibrahîm* as the Arabs call it, is three miles north of Damascus, at the opening of a wild ravine which runs far up into the heart of Anti-Lebanon. It is a rude mosque built on the side of a naked cliff, its inner chamber opening into a deep cleft. Several legends are attached to it. Some say Abraham was born there; others, that he worshipped God at that spot when he turned back from the pursuit of the kings who had plundered Sodom (Gen. xiv. 15); others, that he had an altar there when he was King of Damascus; but, probably,

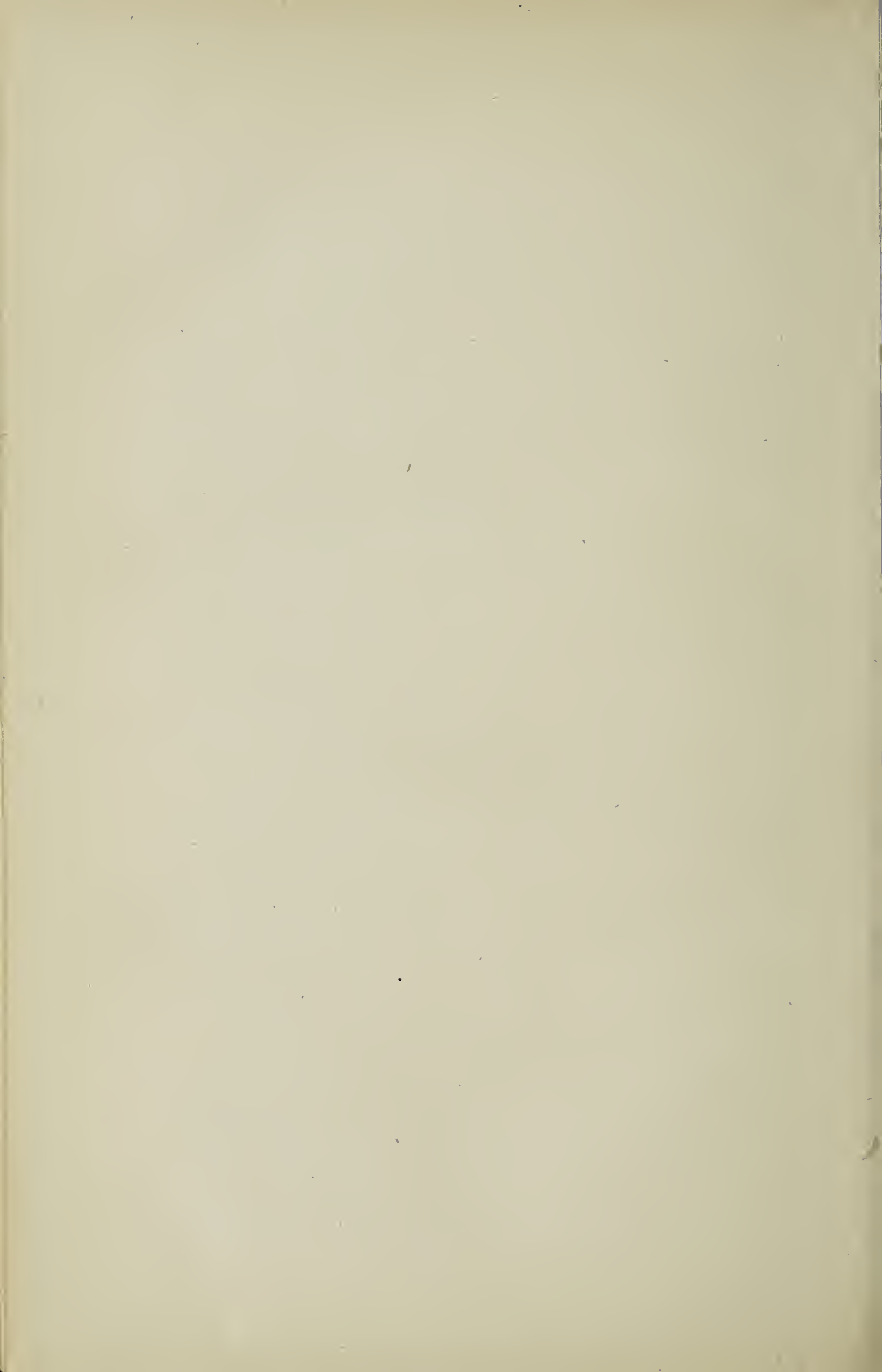
the oldest reference to it is that which Josephus quotes from the historian Nicolas:—"The name of Abraham is still famous at Damascus; and a village is shown there which takes its name from the patriarch, being called the 'Habitation of Abraham'" (*Ant.* i. 7. 2).

Helbon.—The prophet says of Tyre, "Damascus was thy merchant .... in *the wine of Helbon* and white wool" (Ezek. xxvii. 18). At the head of the ravine, at whose mouth is the "Habitation of Abraham," lies the village of *Helbon.* Its narrow valley is shut in by steep bare cliffs, and long shelving banks, from two to three thousand feet in height. The bottom of the glen is filled with luxuriant orchards; and terraced vineyards extend far up the mountain slopes, the vines often clinging to spots where one would think no human foot could rest. The village consists of about fifty substantial houses, clustering round an old mosque, from beneath which bursts a noble fountain. Over the fountain is a porch resting on antique columns; and a hollowed stone, with a Greek legend bearing the name of the "Great King Markos," receives the water. Along the terraces and in the valley below are extensive ruins. This is the Helbon of Ezekiel; and these are the vineyards which produced the wine famed alike in the marts of Tyre and in the court of Persia.

The Tomb of Abel.—The Damascenes believe that the Garden of Eden was situated in their own plain, and that the clay of which Adam was formed was taken from the bank of the Abana. It is not strange, therefore, that they should have located the tomb of Abel in the same region. On a lofty cliff overhanging the sublime glen of the Abana, about fifteen miles north of Damascus, is the reputed tomb. It measures *thirty feet in length.* Beside it are the ruins of a small temple. Looking down from that dizzy height one sees, in and around a modern village, the ruins of an ancient city; while the dark openings and façades, which thickly dot the opposite cliff, mark its necropolis. In this city one

can trace the probable origin of the curious tradition of *Abel's* tomb. The city, as we learn from a Latin inscrip tion on the side of an old excavated road, was called *Abila ;* and it was not difficult for imaginative Arabs to form out of this name the story of Abel's tomb.

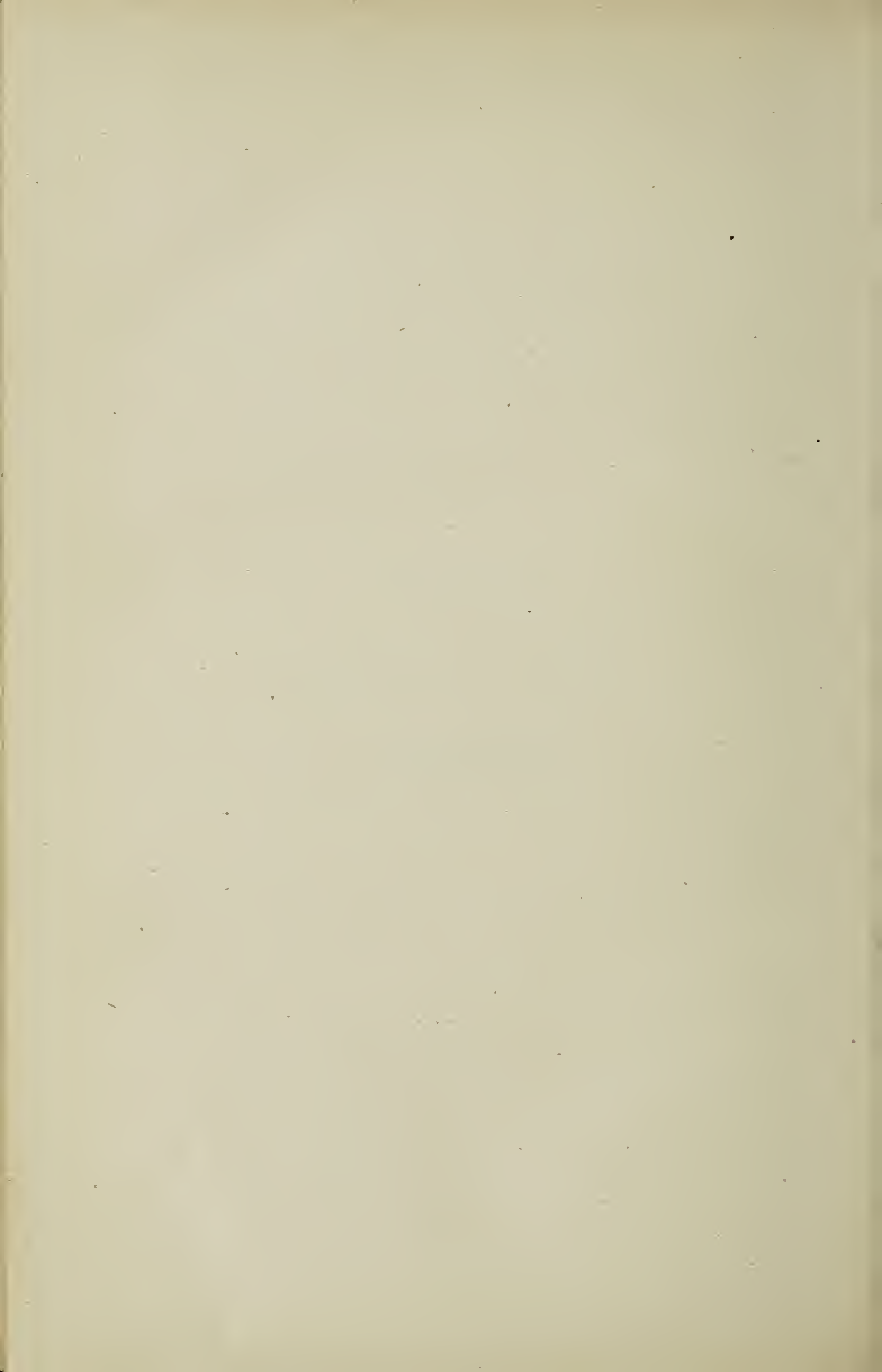
But Abila itself has some sacred interest. It was the capital of that province of *Abilene* of which Lysanias was tetrarch when John the Baptist entered on his public ministry (Luke iii. 1). The site is singularly wild and romantic. Just above it the Abana cuts through the central chain of Anti-Lebanon; but as it makes a sharp turn, one can only see a vast recess in the mountain side, backed by a semicircle of cliffs from three to four hundred feet high. Within this recess, looking out on the windings of the glen below, lie the ruins of Abila; and in the rocks and precipices overhead are its tombs.





APPENDIX.







APPENDIX.

A.

THE following estimate of the numbers murdered in Syria during the massacres of 1860, was drawn up with great care by the Rev. S. Robson of Damascus, and kindly given to me. It is much lower than my own estimate founded on official documents, and letters from friends during, and immediately after, the insurrection. It is probably nearer the truth than mine, for, during the excitement of those fearful scenes, it was impossible, even for the soberest minds, to avoid exaggeration; and very many who had succeeded in escaping, or secreting themselves, were at first supposed to have been killed. I have heard of one who remained for four days in a well; of another who lay for a considerable time under a heap of slain; of several who apostatized.

No estimate of the numbers actually murdered can give an adequate idea of the terrible results of those massacres. Thousands who escaped the sword died of fright, of famine, or of subsequent privations. Those murdered were men, mostly in the prime of life, the only stay and support of wives and children. Their houses were burned; their property was swept away; all means of support were taken from them. The survivors were driven forth, homeless, penniless, and in some cases naked and wounded. Many of the women and girls, too, were, according to the usual Muslem practice, made the slaves of their brutal persecutors.

Mr. Robson's careful statement will be read with much interest:—

"After the massacre in Damascus the clergy and chief people of each sect made out a list of the persons belonging to their community who were killed, as far as it was possible to ascertain their names. Those lists contained the names of about *twelve hundred of the known inhabitants of the city.* It is certain, therefore, that that number, at least of persons permanently resident in Damascus, perished during the three days of the massacre.

"But besides these there was in the city at the time of the massacre, as at all times, a considerable number of strangers, who were brought by some business, and were staying for a longer or shorter time in lodgings in various parts of the city — in the Mohammedan as well as in the Christian quarter. Of these some were from other towns or districts of Syria, some were Syrians from Mesopotamia, a few were from places farther east, a few were Copts, and others from Egypt, and many were Armenians from Asia Minor and Constantinople. *It is impossible to ascertain how many persons of this class were killed in the massacre.*

"Another class of strangers in Damascus at the time of the massacre consisted of the Christian inhabitants of the surrounding villages, who had taken refuge in the city from the dangers which threatened them in their own homes. Some of the people of Hasbeiya and a large number of those of Rasheiya, who had escaped from the massacres in those towns, fled to Damascus. And during the month which elapsed between those massacres and that in the city, the Christians, men, women, and children, fled to the city from all the villages in the plain of Damascus, and from most of those in Hermon, Wady et-Teim, and Anti-Lebanon. These refugees amounted to several thousands. They were lodged in the churches, schools, and convents, and in unoccupied khans and houses, and they were daily fed by the charity of their co-religionists in the city. For that purpose money was collected from the people and donations were made from the church funds. The majority of these refugees were of the Greek Church. Being crowded together, and mostly in public places as churches and schoolrooms, a very large number of them was killed. It is certain that in proportion to their numbers many more of them were killed than of the inhabitants of the city, but there were no means of ascertaining the exact number who perished.

"The opinion, however, of those best able to judge is that the number of strangers killed exceeded that of the inhabitants who perished. The best estimates of the number vary from *thirteen hundred to fifteen hundred.*

"I am sure, therefore, that I am rather below than above the truth in saying that on the 9th, 10th, and 11th of July, 1860, *there were murdered in Damascus at least two thousand five hundred adult male Christians.* This is the conclusion to which I have come after the most careful inquiries.

"The most careful estimates put down the number massacred in the castle of Hasbeiya, on the afternoon of the 11th of June, at about *twelve hundred,* and the number similarly massacred on the same day in the castle of Rasheiya at about *three hundred and fifty.*

"Just about one half of the adult males of Deir el-Kamr perished in the massacre in that town. The most exact estimates make the number of killed to be *between eleven and twelve hundred.*

"A few days previous to the massacres of Hasbeiya and Rasheiya about

one hundred and twenty Christians were massacred at a village called Kinâkir, on the west border of the Haurân.

"About the same time — that is immediately after the commencement of the war in Lebanon — a large body of Christians fled from the mountains to take refuge in Sidon. The gates of the city were closed against them, and they were obliged to remain in the gardens. There they were attacked by the Druses from the Lebanon, and the Mohammedans from the city, and about three hundred were killed.

"These are all the massacres; but a few Christians were killed in almost every village in which there were Christian inhabitants around Damascus; in the Ghûtah, Wady el-Ajam, Hermon, Upper Wady et-Teim, Lower Wady et-Teim, and Anti-Lebanon, and also in the Bekaa and Belâd Baalbek. In some villages only two or three, in many six or eight or more, and in a few considerably more were thus murdered; but no accurate estimate of the whole number is known to me. These murders were very deplorable in themselves, but the number of them is small when compared with that of the persons killed in the massacres, and *I omit them entirely from the calculation I am about to give.* I omit also, of course, those who were killed in war.

"The following is then the best summary I can give:—

Damascus	about	2,500
Hasbeiya	,,	1,200
Rasheiya	,,	350
Deir el-Kamr	,,	1,150
Sidon	,,	300
Kinâkir	,,	120
		5,620

"If to these five thousand six hundred and twenty were added those killed, as noticed above, in the villages of Damascus, Hermon, Anti-Lebanon, and the Bekaa, we may safely say that about *six thousand adult male Christians were murdered in cold blood in the massacres in Syria in June and July* 1860."

B.

The following most interesting narrative of his personal sufferings, and wonderful escape from the hands of a blood-thirsty mob, was written by Dr. Meshakah in August 1860, for and at the request of the Rev. S. Robson.

The original document in Arabic is in Mr. Robson's possession, and he kindly favoured me with this translation.

I may state that Dr. Meshakah is a Protestant, one of the first fruits of the Damascus mission. He is a man of considerable learning, of high talent, and of good social position. He was held in the highest respect by all sects and classes; and being a physician, and having great influence with the government and with foreign consuls, he had many opportunities of serving others. These he never failed to embrace, and numbers of Mohammedans had experienced his kindness. Some years ago he was appointed vice-consul for the United States of America. His janizary, a Mohammedan, proved faithful, and by his courage and devotion was the means of saving his life.

TRANSLATION

"Narrative of what happened to me in the year 1860:—

"In the morning of Monday the 9th of July the city was perfectly quiet, and his lordship, the Emir Abd el-Kâdir,[1] went on his own business to the village of El-Ashrafiyeh.

"At two o'clock in the afternoon an insurrection broke out in the city, because the authorities had put in irons some individuals who had that day made figures of crosses in the streets, and compelled the Christians who passed by to trample on them.[2]

"I was then alone in my house. My janizary and my eldest son were absent on business in the palace, and my second son was at school. As soon as the outbreak began, my janizary, Hajy Aly Alwan, hastened home, but the insurrection had already reached the neighbourhood of my house, and it was no longer possible for me to go out of it alone. I sent the janizary, therefore, to the Emir Abd el-Kâdir, and requested him to send some of his men to protect me. It happened that he had that moment returned from El-Ashrafiyeh, and had with him only six of his followers. He sent me four of them, but as they were unarmed they were unable to reach me. My janizary, however, bravely ventured and came to me alone.

"When he came we locked the doors of the house. Almost immediately several armed men arrived and began to break the door with hatchets. I had only just time to put into my pocket a quantity of gold and silver coin which I had provided in anticipation of such an occasion, when the door was broken open, and the armed men—most of them Kurdish irregular soldiers—burst in and began to fire at me. I escaped, and while they were occupied in plundering the house, I went out of the back door with the janizary, and my two little children, Abraham and Selma. At first I hoped to conceal myself in the house of one of my Moslem neighbours, till it might be possible for me to escape to the house of Abd el-Kâdir; but not

one of them would admit me.[3] Then I attempted to go in the direction of the Emir's house; but a mob met me and fired upon me. I threw some coins among them to occupy their attention, and I turned back in the direction of the place called *Bab Tuma* ('Thomas' Gate') where there was a guard of soldiers. There another armed party met me and fired upon me. I threw to them also a quantity of coins, as I had done to the former party. Again I turned back and took a third way, and again a large party of armed men met me. I knew eight of these men, and gave their names to the Government, and six of them have been arrested. Some of these men attacked me with fire-arms, some with swords, some with hatchets and axes, and some with clubs. My two little children were behind me weeping, and screaming, saying, 'Kill us and spare our father, for we cannot live without him!' One of these cruel men struck my little daughter with a hatchet, and wounded her. The attention of this party also I engaged by throwing money to them. Praise be to His name, none of the shots struck me, though one man fired twice at me from a distance of only two or three yards; but I was wounded with other weapons. I got a dangerous wound on the head from the blow of a hatchet; and had not the janizary turned it partly aside, and caught the arm of the murderer, the blow would have killed me. I received also on the eye a blow from a large club, on my right shoulder a cut of a sword, and several blows on my right arm, in consequence of which I cannot yet hold a pen in my right hand. On my left arm I got only one blow of a club. I had several wounds also in other parts of my body.

"Amid all this danger and struggle, I reached the Bazaar of Bab Tuma with the assistance of the janizary who kept constantly by me. Mustafa Bey,[4] the chief of the police in that quarter of the city, was in the bazaar, and I begged him to take me to his house; but though his house was close at hand, he refused, and ordered some of his men to put me in the house of Faris el-Khalaf, one of his followers, and a man notorious for wickedness. He went away with his followers and occupied himself in collecting his friends to his house, as I could see from the windows of the room in which I was left. I could see also the breaking of doors, and the plundering of Christian houses, and the murdering of the men. Mustafa Bey's men were busy plundering, and they brought some of the booty to the house in which I was. That made me think that some of the murderers would come and kill me, as happened to many of the Christians who were murdered in the houses of the Mohammedans where they had taken refuge. I resolved, therefore, as soon as night came, to leave the house I was in, and go to that of Mustafa Bey himself, hoping that he would not venture to kill me openly in his own house.

"As soon as it was dark, a number of armed men came to the door and

asked for me. The door was opened, and I thought they had come to kill me; but when they entered I found that they belonged to the Emir Abd el-Kâdir, that one of my Mohammedan friends, Mohammed es-Sutery, was with them, and that they had come to save me. They took me to the Emir, who received me with all kindness; but as I was covered with blood from my wounds, and his house was filled with a crowd of Christians, he permitted Mohammed es-Sutery to take me to his house which was very near. He removed me at once; and leaving me in his house, went in search of my family, from the last of whom I was separated before entering the house in which Mustafa Bey put me. He continued his search all night, and brought to me all the members of my family, except my second son Selîm, who remained hidden for three days, while I supposed he was murdered.

"I shall state how it happened that Es-Sutery came to the house of Mustafa Bey's follower to seek me. As soon as he saw the insurrection begun in the city, he hastened to my house with a number of his friends to save me. He found it plundered and abandoned; but he searched for me till he learned that I had got to Mustafa Bey. He went to him and demanded me from him. Mustafa declared he did not know where I was. This caused es-Sutery to distrust and fear him. He went, therefore, immediately to the Emir Abd el-Kâdir, told him what had happened, and assured him that I had fallen into the hands of Mustafa Bey alive. The Emir at once sent with him eight chosen men of his armed Algerines. They demanded me from Mustafa, and he, unable longer to deny his knowledge of my hiding-place, sent his nephew to guide them to me.

"On account of my wounds I remained a whole month in the house of Mohammed es-Sutery, and was treated with the greatest kindness and respect.

"I and my family reached his house, stripped of our clothes, and robbed of everything else we possessed. My little daughter and myself were wounded. I had only two or three piastres left of the money I had put in my pocket; but Sheikh Selîm Effendi[5] sent us clothes and other necessaries, and money for our daily expenses, though he had in his house at the time about a hundred Christians, all whose wants he was supplying. As for me, on the morning of July the 9th, I was one of the rich, and on the morning of the 10th I was one of the poorest; but in every state I praise the most high God for saving me and my family alive.

"The distrust I felt of the house in which I was first placed, turned out to be well founded, for after the arrival of Fuad Pasha, it was proved that Mustafa Bey and his nephews and followers, had in various ways killed hundreds of Christians, and among them the Rev. William Graham. But the Most High and Holy One delivered me from their brutality. Mustafa

Bey, two of his nephews, and several of his followers, were hanged on the 20th of the following month.

"The insurrection commenced in the bazaars in the city, and did not reach me till an hour afterwards. Meantime the English Consul requested the Pasha to send a guard to my house. The Pasha replied he had sent a colonel to protect me;[6] but no one ever came to me from the Government."

The following notes to this narrative are kindly communicated by Mr. Robson, and will serve to throw light on some of the incidents and statements:

1. "The Emir Abd el-Kâdir was a chief of the Moors of Algiers, and their most distinguished leader in the protracted struggle against France. After a long and brave resistance, he fell into the hands of the conquerors, in the reign of Louis Philippe. He was afterwards released from confinement and exiled to Damascus, where he resided for a number of years previous to 1860. On account of his high rank, his fame as a warrior, and his zeal as Mohammedan, he had great influence in Damascus with both the people and the government. A large number of Algerines, too haughty and bigoted to live under a conquering infidel power, have emigrated to Syria. Many of them lived in and around Damascus. These all obey the Emir as their chief. The Emir, like every one else in the city, had been for some weeks dreading a massacre. Though an earnest Mohammedan he was anxious to prevent it; and he made arrangements for arming the Algerines, and employing them in defending or saving the Christians. He had been constantly on the alert for two or three weeks previous to Monday the 9th; but means had been taken to persuade him that all danger was past. Hence, as Meshakah says, the city seemed perfectly quiet on that morning, and the Emir went from home on private business.

2. "The arrest of two Mohammedans for publicly insulting Christians was, of course, not the cause of the insurrection, but *a pretext for accomplishing a previously arranged plan.*

3. "Dr. Meshakah often had it in his power to serve in various ways his Mohammedan neighbors, and never neglected an opportunity of doing so. Yet when his life was in danger—when he was hunted by a blood-thirsty mob, not one of them would give him shelter! Mrs. Meshakah went among them from door to door, begging them to receive her husband. She prostrated herself on the ground before their wives and daughters, kissed their feet, and with streaming eyes offered them her jewels, even the very hair of her head. But not one of them was moved to pity!

4. "Mustafa Bey had received much kindness from English Consuls, and

always professed the greatest friendship for Englishmen. Dr. Meshakah was long in the employment of the English consulate, was a British subject, and had been for many years a personal friend of Mustafa Bey. It was natural for him to expect protection from Mustafa. There is, however, no doubt now on the mind of any one acquainted with the facts, that if Abd el-Kâdir's men had not rescued him from the house in which Mustafa placed him, he would have been murdered before morning.

5. "The Sheikh Selîm Effendi is a Mohammedan. Had it not been for Abd el-Kâdir, Sheikh Selîm and a few others of a similar spirit, the slaughter of the Christians would have been much greater than it was. Such men deserve grateful and honourable mention.

6. "This is a specimen of the deceitful policy of the Pasha and the other Turkish authorities during the preparation for and progress of the massacre."



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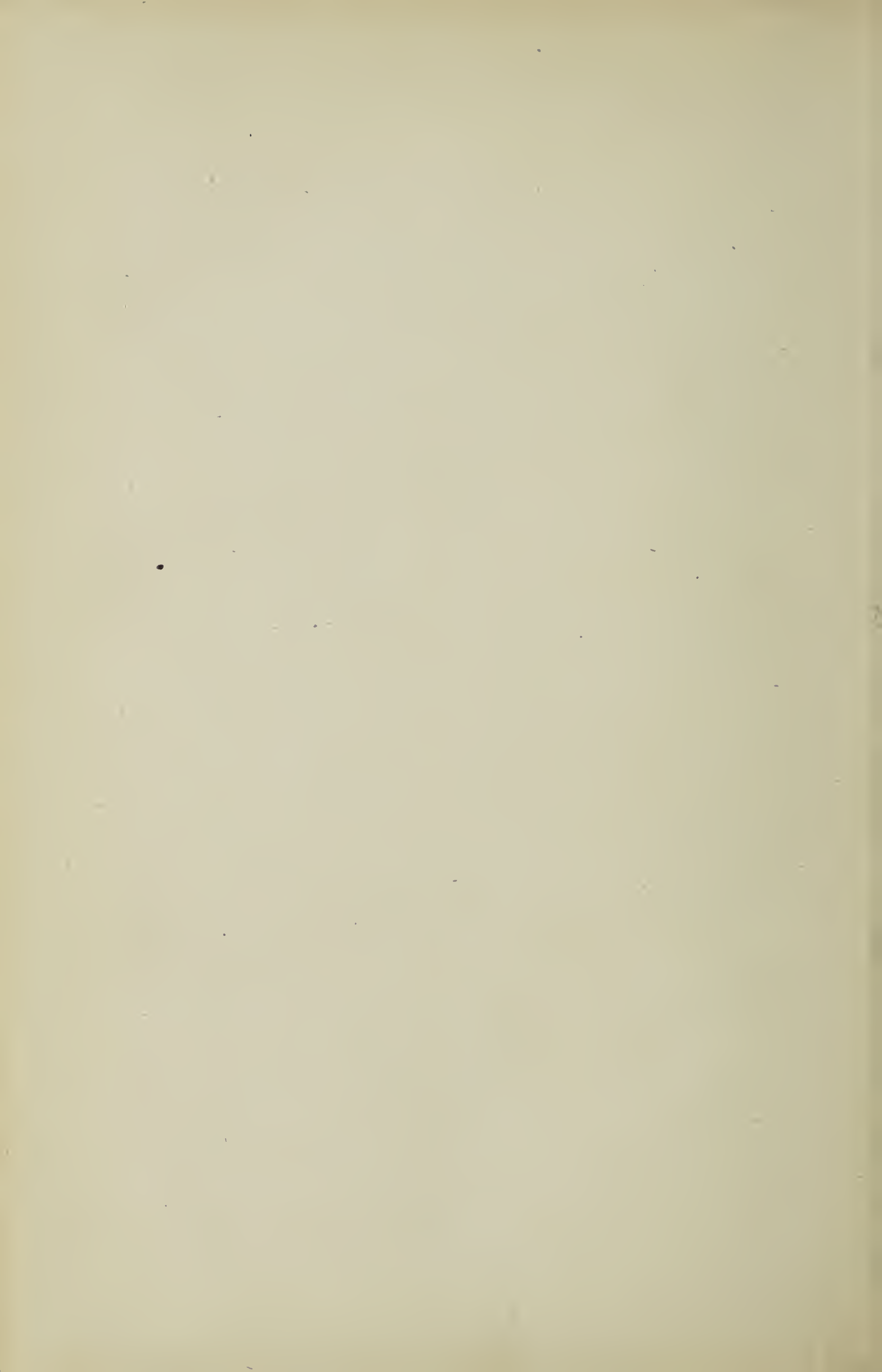
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